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A phenomenological study of Qatari student experiences of identities, languages and academic achievement

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RESEARCH BASED THESIS (RBT)

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF QATARI STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITIES, LANGUAGES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

By

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of

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ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates the lived experiences of Qatari university students with regards to education, language and identity. Qatar provides a unique site for such research, since it has a strange demographic situation in which Qataris are a minority compared to foreigners; English is dominant when compared to Arabic; and the education system of Qatar is being revolutionized continuously in the 21st century. This context has motivated the study to conduct an inquiry into how young Qatari students experience these phenomena in their lifeworlds. The research questions of the thesis are concerned with how the participants understand themselves; how they experience their educational activities; what their perspective is about academic achievement; and how they see the language situation in Qatar and how it influences them. The methodology chosen for the study is a phenomenological interview-based design. For reasons described, the theoretical background that seemed most useful for such a project is interpretivist-constructivist because the main line of inquiry is about the lived and shared experiences of the participants. Many methodological measures are taken to ensure that the results of the thesis are trustworthy. As the data is analyzed, a concept of identity is construed, based on the relevant literature and the initial review of the interviews, and it is applied to the analyses in relation to education, achievement and language. As the findings point out, the participants of the study experience a complicated process of negotiation in multiple layers of social reality and multiple circles of belongings in living through the complex and unique socio-cultural situations of present day Qatar.

Keywords: identity, negotiated belonging, post-colonial theory, social construction, English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as a foreign language (EFL), Qatar, academic achievement, phenomenology, international universities

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I. Introduction

Context

Qatar is a small Arab country in the Persian Gulf. “At the beginning of the 20th century, Qatar consisted of a small set of villages dependent on pearl diving, camel breeding, and fishing and was governed by Islamic principles and tribal custom” (Brewer et al., 2006, p. 2). While British interest controlled the Gulf from the middle of the 19th century (Davidson, 2008), strong Western influence began in 1917 when Qatar became a British protectorate, regaining independence in 1971. The most valuable natural resource of Qatar, oil, was discovered in 1939 and led to the “oil boom” in the 1970s. The “boom” doubled the population of the country, raising it to 744,000 as documented in the 2004 census. At this date, 60% of the population consisted of expatriates from India, Pakistan, Iran and other countries (Brewer et al., 2006). The demographic trend that started in the 1970s continues to the present date. According to the 2010 census, the population was just under 1.7 million. But this figure does not reflect that some 91% of this population is expatriate, which makes up the majority of the workforce. Only 8.8% of the total population is made up of Qataris 10 years of age or older (Qatar Census, 2011). This shows an extraordinary situation in which the Qatari population is actually a minority, compared to the majority of foreigners and expatriates both from the East and the West.

As this brief overview indicates two factors definitely have a strong impact in Qatar: one is the demographic situation, the other is the history of British colonial influence. The demographic peculiarity is also manifest in different social and cultural aspects. Particularly, the thesis is concerned with the language situation and with educational consequences. First then, regarding language, Qatar is a place that provides unique insight into the workings of English as a lingua franca (ELF henceforth). On one hand, According to Jenkins (2006), ELF is to be distinguished from the formula of English as an international language. ELF should

not suggest that there is a central variety of English that has spread out due to globalization. Rather, ELF research seeks to treat the various uses of English on their own terms and not as impoverished varieties of Standard English. “A useful basic definition is provided on the website of the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (henceforth VOICE): ELF is ‘an additionally acquired language system which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages’” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 928). On the other hand, ELF has to be distinguished from the concept of “World Englishes”. “World Englishes” refers to a framework of research that is concerned with the localized uses of English around the globe. A major difference between World Englishes and ELF is that the former uses a concept of language that still centers around multiple fixed varieties and linguistic standards (geographically and culturally divergent), while ELF avoids using fixed varieties and standards and focuses on the process of communication as being transformed by globalization. Research on ELF, as emphasized by Jenkins (2006, 2011, 2012), has pragmatic importance with regards to the teaching of English in a pluricentric rather than monocentric framework.

ELF is dominant in Qatar in the sense that due to the unique demographic situation, English has become a universal tool of communication between parties whose first language is most often not English. In Qatar, English is virtually necessary for most types of social interactions. From everyday tasks of shopping, applying for a visa, and so forth, to many areas of academia, English has acquired unprecedented dominance. It seems safe to say that with its demographic diversity, the situation of Qatar provides intriguing contribution to studying globalization (e.g., Chriost, 2007) and its effects on the local language situation. In this case, the British influence with which Qatar began the 20th century is also of importance, since Qatar’s most significant social changes, before its independence, have occurred while it was a British protectorate.

One of the most pressing issues of globalization and the spread of English in Qatar is preserving local culture and the Arabic language. This issue is generally present in the Gulf (e.g., Randall & Samimi, 2010). Due to the rapid spread of English, many researchers argue that Arabic is being marginalized in a number of social contexts (cf. Bashshur, 2010; Findlow, 2006; Troudi, 2009). As Findlow (2006) describes, the literature on the interplay between the spread of English and the preservation of Arabic tends to rely on a superficial binary opposition between Arabic as the language of the past, of nostalgia, of authenticity, of tradition, and so on, while English is posited as the language of the future, of modernity, of internationalism, of business, of science, and so on. Due to the educational situation, students are supposed to face difficulties in reconciling the devaluation of their first language and the dominance of English (Zakharia, 2010), especially in the Gulf.

As Brewer et al. (2006) describe, there was no formal education before Qatar became a protectorate. Children memorized passages from the Qur'an and learned reading and writing in informal schools. In 1956, Qatar's formal Ministry of Education was established with British control (Gonzalez, Karoly, Constant, Salem & Goldman, 2008, p. 41). Britain treated the sheikdoms of the Gulf States as informally belonging to its empire. This meant that the sheikdoms did not receive substantial support or resources, which would have been needed for the development of education. The British influence therefore was strongly limiting in these areas (Davidson, 2008). As a consequence, the first higher education institution, the College of Education, was opened as late as 1973, after independence and the "oil boom". The same institution was transformed into Qatar University in 1977 (Attiyah & Khalifa, 2009) with four colleges: Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, and Shari'a and Islamic Studies. The university added two additional colleges in the 1980s: the College of Engineering and the College of Administration and Economics.

Since the 1980s, Qatar has been struggling with concerns about academic performance and in relation to its market situation dominated by expatriate labor. This reformatory process led to the large-scale educational reforms of the 21st century. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (The United Arab Emirates, The Kingdom of Bahrain, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Kuwait) spares no resources and support to develop the educational systems according to Western academic standards. The educational reformation is closely related to the dominance of ELF, which dominance is translated into educational contexts by English becoming the primary medium of instruction. The privileged American models of education (Mazawi, 2008) also reinforce the connection between globalization and Westernization in Qatar.

Considerations about the expatriate workforce and the market situation offer motivation for the educational reforms. Under the label of “Qatarization”, the governmental program is aimed at the training and education of Qataris to be able to fill the job positions in the private sector that are held mostly by foreigners. A number of studies have found that Qataris entering the job market either intend to fill governmental positions or are employed in such positions (e.g., Moini et al., 2009). As Al-Misnad (2010) asserts, in this context, the challenge in Qatar is to create a skilled Qatari workforce that would lessen the dependence on expatriates in the private sector.

The Emir of Qatar invited the American think-tank, RAND, in 2001 to conduct research for the best course of reformation to achieve these goals, which has led to a large number of studies in the second half of the 2000s, concerned with the state and proposed reformation of Qatar’s education system (Augustine & Krop, 2008; Brewer et al., 2006, 2007; Constant, Nadareishvili & Salem, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2008, 2009; Guarino et al., 2009; Martorell, Nadareishvili & Salem, 2008; Moini et al., 2009; Stasz et al., 2007; Zellman et al., 2009). The extensive studies have laid the groundwork for reform programs that determine

the fate of Qatari education. Due to the studies above, the reformation carried out concerns not only higher education, but the K-12 system has been revamped as well. Following RAND's suggestions, Qatar has adopted an "Independent" school system of secondary education besides the governmental one, which provides extensive English-language education and preparation for Western higher education. The most significant changes in higher education were probably the reformation of Qatar University and the establishment of Education City in Doha in 2001 by the Qatar Foundation. Education City is a campus conglomerate that houses branches of prestigious international universities from all around the world (Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar School of the Arts; Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar; Texas A&M University at Qatar; Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar; Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar; Northwestern University in Qatar; HEC Paris; UCL Qatar). As in the case of the reform of secondary education, the higher education changes also stress the necessity of English since most of the programs at universities in Education City use English as a medium of instruction, along with many programs of Qatar University, the national university. The findings of the RAND studies are elaborated in the "Analysis and Findings" chapter.

Altogether, it is not far-fetched to say that the aims and methods of Qatarization are somewhat paradoxical. As Romani (2009) states, for instance, the realization of the aims of Qatarization require foreign manpower, expertise and institutions. The goal is to make Qatar less dependent on an expatriate workforce, but to reach this goal the methods of Qatarization seem to involve more and more dependence. For instance, educating Qatari professionals at one of the international universities in Education City requires the university as a foreign institution, mainly staffed by foreigners, employing foreign professors and officials, while the education itself is in English and according to Western models. In brief, Qatarization seems to necessitate the Westernization of Qatar. Accordingly, Rostron (2009) examined the

intercultural aspects of liberal arts education in Education City and said that the clash of cultures, ideologies and values prompted some observers “to interpret liberal education as a threat of westernization” (p. 226).

Foci and Rationale

The thesis attempts to approach the complexities of Qatar’s unique situation by shedding light on the interconnections between identity, language use and education in a qualitative study that is concerned with the lived experiences of its participants. Following, for example, Norton’s (2000) work on the relations between language learning and identity, the study aims at investigating the participants’ experience regarding these phenomena.

Research Questions

In order to explicate and specify the interests outlined above, the study has set out to investigate the following research questions:

1. How do Qatari students understand themselves and who they are? What are the most important factors in self-understanding and do they involve identity issues?
2. Is there a connection between identity and education for Qatari students? If there is, how do they experience the connection? If there is not, why not?
3. How do they experience academic achievement? Is academic achievement related to Qatari students’ self-understanding?
4. How do Qatari students experience the language situation in Qatar, and especially in relation to the themes of self-understanding, identity, education and achievement?

Research Strategy and Benefits

The present study has set out to answer the questions above by designing a qualitative, interview-based methodology. Since the focus is primarily on the experiences of Qatari students of higher education, it was deemed appropriate to establish a phenomenological approach to the research. The participants were selected purposively, based on different

criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data collection was done through interviewing, by employing a phenomenological interview design (Spinelli, 2005), consisting of in-depth (Marvasti, 2004) interviews in a focused (Yin, 2003) and semi-structured (Richards, 2003) interview format. According to Langdridge (2007), the semi-structured format is the most appropriate for phenomenological research.

First of all, the goal of the thesis is to offer plausible and dependable (Spinelli, 2005) interpretations of the participants' perspectives and experiences. The corresponding benefit is a better understanding of what the participants are going through in the extraordinary, unique and complex linguacultural situation of Qatar. Through the interpretations of the participants' experiences, the thesis suggests a valuable perspective on the intriguing situation of Qatar and Qatari students. The study also suggests a conception of identity that should be employed in this case. Together with the grounding of the phenomenological approach, it is hoped that the concepts, methods or results add to the academic stock of knowledge by providing in-depth analyses. Such knowledge might be transferable to different contexts, but only if the differences in other contexts are taken into account in the transfer process.

Structure

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature about the notion of identity, the implications of social constructionism and phenomenology and various studies of postcolonialism, ELF and of Arab identity. Chapter 3 outlines the phenomenological approach and its theoretical background in detail and describes the chosen methodology for the study. Chapter 4 is concerned with the coding and analysis of the data and with the findings and discussion, providing the detailed interpretations of the interviews in corresponding thematic sections. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis.

II. Literature Review

The Concept of Identity

Since the thesis employs concepts and investigates issues in relation to the notion of identity, it is necessary to address certain conceptual and theoretical difficulties with regards to the notion. Identity has been a buzzword for the social sciences for a while, and many researchers employ the concept in one way or the other. However, this popularity and heterogeneity has provoked lively debates among researchers. The thesis begins with a working definition of identity as “independent belonging”. With this notion, the study intends to draw attention to the fact that, on the one hand, identity is circumscribed by the communalities that the individual is embedded in, but on the other hand, the communalities should be seen as a framework in which there are various positions that individuals can take and independently take.

One of the main issues then is whether the concept of identity makes sense, particularly in its employment in the present context of empirical research. The definition above, identity as independent belonging, is designed to guide the interpretation of data. Some argue that there are two main trends in social scientific research in theorizing identity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). First, there are the “soft” approaches. In these views, identities are negotiable, fluid and multiple. Norton’s (e.g., 2000) work could exemplify this trend; in her theory, the subject is multiple and identities are contested, negotiated at sites of struggle and contradiction. Soft approaches basically emphasize the non-fixity and constructedness of identity. Considering identity in a soft way might be useful because it gives importance to the active, agentive roles that people play regarding their own identities. Also, taking into account the constructedness of identities might serve as a solid theoretical background for empirically examining how people actually encounter themselves in these social contexts.

This last point brings the discussion to the hard approaches which emphasize the hard dynamics of identity politics that the soft approaches cannot account for (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Contemporary identity politics manifests a number of essentialist theses (i.e. that

ethnic identity, for example, does not seem fluid at all but is subject to external and binding forces in many cases), and the soft approach cannot address the fact that identities seem to be fixed and stable in a lot of important social situations. For instance, national identity is socially fixed (in identification documents, etc.) and comes with a number of rights and obligations, so even though one might feel to belong to a nation and one might try to actively construct one's identity as if one belonged to a nation, one will not acquire the rights and obligations unless it is institutionally recognized. However, the hard approach of conceptualizing identity faces a number of problems because of its underlying and highly contested assumptions such as all people "should" or "ought" or just plainly "have" identity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Since both approaches of identity are contested, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) criticize the concept of identity as such, arguing that it loses its "analytical purchase" (p. 1) in both approaches. The question then is whether identity defined as "independent belonging" transcends the criticisms and whether it can usefully assist the present study in empirically investigating the lived experiences of Qatar students.

There are different positions from that of Brubaker's and Cooper's (2000). The present study initially aims to retain the concept of identity since the assumption is that it has not only theoretical but pragmatic importance for the empirical research into people's self-understandings. For this reason, the arguments for the analytical usefulness of identity need to be reviewed. For instance, Sökefeld (2001) intends to undo the apparent exclusivity between hard and soft or strong and weak approaches to identity that Brubaker and Cooper (2000) posit. Sökefeld has a particular view of social anthropological research, namely that it works in an interactional way in which researcher and participant contribute to the shared activity of knowledge creation. Thus, the terms that the researcher uses are not his or her arbitrary application of a theory to his or her field, but are products of a common effort between the researcher and the participants. Identity is also considered as a concept that is not forced onto

people externally by researchers and academics, but as one that is assumed and by people who participate in a research. In order to explain this dual-nature of the term, Sökefeld proposes that identity can only be properly understood and functional if one does not treat hard and soft approaches exclusively. For Sökefeld, hard and soft approaches are two poles of a dual hermeneutics. In interpreting identity in the hard way, one considers it to be something socio-culturally given and fixed, for example. In understanding identity in the soft way, one focuses on the agentic and active participation of people in creating their identities which are multiple and fluid. This dual hermeneutics means that identities can be approached as constructed and substantial, and their interplay depends on the context. Since human beings are individuals and “reflexively acting selves” (p. 542), the dual hermeneutics of the identity concept requires one not only to look at the social processes that can be said to construct and impose identities but also at the individual self-understandings and self-conceptions that can show identities to be fixed and stable in a good number of instances. It seems that considering both hard and soft aspects of identity theorizing might be useful in interpreting personal self-understandings. In this regard, the arguments of Sökefeld might be illuminating for this study’s working definition of identity as independent belonging in the process of empirical research that the study conducts.

All in all, the arguments of Brubaker and Cooper (2000) point to important facets of the notion of identity. For example, the alternatives they offer instead of identity might be treated as conceptual analyses regarding the notion of identity, and in this sense, they are essential components. Also, the clear distinction between soft and hard, weak and strong approaches to identity is useful in assessing the advantages and disadvantages of each. However, Sökefeld (2001) raises significant points about the assumed exclusivity of the approaches. Most importantly, the present paper retains the concept of identity exactly because of this “hard and soft” duality, dynamic or dialectic: identity as independent

belonging can explain how one's own self-understanding can be experienced as being a product that alienates from its producer. Since the notion of identity is able to encapsulate the aforementioned dual hermeneutics, it remains a valuable explanatory device. Therefore, I adopt the position of Sökefeld (2001) because initially it seems to be the most relevant for the purposes of my research. Employing the notion of identity, human experiences can be investigated as they relate to people's self-constituting practices in a dynamic framework that is rooted in social context that prescribes and constrains these practices and which is largely beyond the conscious control of individuals.

Identity and Social Constructionism

So what are the processes behind self-understandings and identities? One of the most significant aspects is the social arena. Identities do not exist in a vacuum because in reflecting on one's experiences, one constructs the "I" linguistically, for example, and language is interconnected to society. According to the theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966), the self (the object of "I") is a social construction and cannot be understood without reference to the social context. The self is not something given and fixed at birth, but as a complex subjective and objective recognition of identity, it is influenced by the social environment: "the formation of the self, then, must also be understood in relation to both the ongoing organismic development and the social process in which the natural and the human environment are mediated through the significant others" (p. 68).

Arguing this way, the researchers emphasize two perspectives on the development of the self. First, there are given biological and environmental factors, for instance, that are natural determinants of one's self-formation. In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) view, there are genetic presuppositions for the formation of the self. Specifically, the two theorists argue that since there is no species-specific environment for humans or "human organisms", the biology of humanity imposes severe limitations on the relationship between humans and their

environment. Berger and Luckmann borrow the long-standing, traditional idea that the uniqueness of humanity in the natural world is manifest in that the position of humans in the natural world is much more imperfect than that of other animals; however, the early phase of organismic human development is intertwined with the natural and the human environment. The upshot of this peculiarity is that humans possess an outstanding degree of plasticity in the way they are capable of reacting to their environment. The socio-cultural end-goal of early development is “becoming a man” that is achieved in various ways in different societies and cultures. This is the way Berger and Luckmann describe the dialectic between humans having a nature biologically and constructing a nature socio-culturally.

Secondly, and as a consequence, the formation of the self cannot be understood without reference to the social perspective. It is mostly visible in interactions with “significant others”, which interactions place and contextualize the self in relation to the social arena, acting as mediators between what is naturally given and what is human product. The social aspect of development is essential not only from a theoretical but from an evolutionary point of view as well. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) say, the organismic resources of humanity are underdeveloped, and cannot solely guarantee or establish stability. Stability is established and maintained by social means, and so the social order is a fundamental condition of organismic development. Without the social order in place, as the two researchers speculate, human conduct would be highly unstable and chaotic. Thus, given the imperfections of human biology relative to other species, humanity needs to produce the social order to create a stable environment for human development. Consequently, with regards to the self, one has to consider both of these perspectives that are intertwined in the self-formation, shaped by social interactions. Ultimately, the social production of reality and the social process of self-formation are two sides of the same coin (p. 204).

As the two researchers warn, the self is not an arbitrary product of self-creation. As part of the social reality, the self is intersubjectively constituted. This term means that self-formation is not an individual process, working in isolation from culture, society and others. Without the plural “selves”, there is no singular “self”. Social interaction is an essential condition of self-formation. The social interactions should primarily be conceived of as linguistic interactions, and so language plays a major role in self-formation. The most distinguished form of linguistic interactions is the “face-to-face” one with parents, relatives and loved ones. In these and other cases, language objectifies the self insofar as it grounds the self in the social world through face-to-face linguistic interactions. When one expresses oneself to another in a social situation, one assumes a position in the social context. Moreover, by this grounding, the self is initiated into the social order, thus the self is socialized. Altogether, identity is created, sustained and negotiated in social environments and mostly through the use of language: “The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 194).

So Berger and Luckmann (1966) employ the concept of identity. Moreover, their theory can be seen as consistent with the dual hermeneutics behind identity (Sökefeld, 2001). In the framework of social constructionism, identities are indeed fluid, constructed and multiple, but they are also key elements in subjective realities. Since these subjective realities stand in a dialectical relationship with society, social relations can have heavy impact on them, and so identities can be and are shaped by society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 194).

Phenomenology and Identity

Berger and Luckmann (1966) draw on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology to investigate the social arena to explain how the reality of everyday experiences is socially constructed. Phenomenology is one of the most influential 20th century branches of

philosophy, mainly associated with Edmund Husserl and his student, Martin Heidegger. Generally, phenomenology has emerged as one of the most significant philosophical mode of inquiry or movement, beginning with Husserl's (2001) aim to get back to the "things themselves". This meant that phenomenology, as presented by Husserl, at its roots took a break from the epistemological stance of philosophers Husserl reacts against, and instead of attempting to capture the deep metaphysical reality behind the world as it appears to us, Husserl questioned the epistemological enterprise, casting a new light on the relationship between people, their experiences and their world. In the present study, this perspective is seen as useful in explaining the empirical data from the interviews regarding the experiences of the Qatari participants.

For the present study, the important phenomenological work is Heidegger's (1927/1962), *Being and Time*. Heidegger coined a new term to refer to human beings, indicating a new concept to replace the old ones and their theoretical "baggage" which was carried by the terms themselves. Instead of the abstract philosophical relationship between the knower and known, the subject and the object, Heidegger posited a relationship that is closer to actual everyday experience. On Heidegger's account, *Dasein* ("being-there") is "being-in-the-world": in their everyday lives, people are immersed naturally in their common world of experience. Every perspective that we have on the world is a particular one shaped by our predispositions created by our embeddedness in the world of everyday life and practices. In discourse or talk, we express our embedded relationship to the world in language for the purposes of communication. Heidegger establishes that human beings have a relationship to their existence; namely, their existence is an issue for them. Moreover, this relationship is something distinctively human. From this Heidegger concludes that one of the fundamental features of human existence is that humans understand their existence or that they approach it

with understanding whether they succeed or not. This is the way in which Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* can be simply characterized.

The question for the thesis then is whether the data from the participants can be interpreted as showing this process of self-understanding. The particular issue concerning this research is whether this Heideggerian theory can influence the empirical study of identity. In basic terms, whether people understand themselves in terms of identity. In Heidegger's phenomenological framework, it is an unavoidable aspect of human life that humans possess self-understanding. If self-understanding can be shown to proceed with considerations of identity, then the phenomenological framework is consistent with one pole of the dual hermeneutics behind identity (Sökefeld, 2001),¹ and it grounds the inquiry into how humans actually understand themselves. In terms of this research, my interest is to find out how far Heidegger's ideas can be used to help the analysis of self-understanding regarding identities.

In addition, phenomenological psychologists like Spinelli (2005) and Langdridge (2007) both argue that the phenomenological method actually deconstructs the pivotal role of the "I" in experience. According to them and based on the tradition of phenomenology, the "I" in "I see the Sun", for instance, is a product of after-the-fact analysis and reflection that does not have a prominent place in the experience itself. In an everyday situation, when one gazes up on the Sun idly, one does not immediately reflect and analyze the gaze by stating: "I see the Sun". Thus, the experience of seeing the Sun is what occupies the most important role of the process, while the "I" that supposedly does the experiencing is a construct of language, reflection and analysis. Now this complicated thesis about the mechanics of consciousness and reflection is in accord with the second pole of the dual hermeneutics behind identity

¹ As mentioned above, Sökefeld (2001) argues that there is a dual hermeneutics regarding soft and hard approaches to identity. If we understand identity in the hard way, we consider it to be given and fixed. In the soft way, identity is understood by focusing on the active and constitutive participation of people in creating their identities. According to Sökefeld, neither dimension can be forgotten.

(Sökefeld, 2001), namely that identity is in a sense constructed. Therefore, phenomenology not only provides ground for recognizing the importance of self-understanding, but also assists in seeing the processes behind these self-understandings and identities.

Identity in Education

At this point, it is important to direct attention to how the ideas of phenomenology and social constructionism can be applied to a more specific context of student identities. More specifically, the question is how identity as independent belonging relates to the education and academic achievement of the students. Regarding achievement, Ansalone (2009) reviews the theories that attempt to explain unequal achievement in American secondary education. It is claimed that history of the problem shows that neither the economic situation of schools nor any reference to cultural deprivation can explain the issue. Moreover, the connection between heredity and intelligence is heavily debated. Ansalone's solution is a theoretical synthesis between the micro and the macro sociological levels of explanation and focus:

A macro sociological approach enables us to focus on children in schools as members of the larger U.S. social class system. [...] On the other hand, the addition of a micro sociological approach, specifically the incorporation of interaction theory, allows us to examine how educational structures (tracking), processes (teacher expectations), and daily classroom interactions may shape academic outcomes by depressing the academic progress of disadvantaged students and facilitating success for children of the upper and middle class (p. 161).

This study complements Ansalone's (2009) synthesis by focusing on a different aspect of achievement by approaching it in a student-based inquiry perspective, as advocated by Wiggan (2007). A student-based inquiry perspective should be founded on qualitative studies that deal with the experiences of students with regards to the issue of achievement. As

Wiggan states: “A core question that should underlie this kind of project is, According to students, what is student achievement, how is it manifested or enacted, and what does it mean?” (p. 324). The present paper not only attempts to answer this type of question but also connects the study of achievement with the study of identity in the unique socio-cultural context of Qatar.

Barnacle (2009), Bonnett (2009), Dall’Alba (2009a) and Ganeson and Ehrich (2009) have applied the philosophical framework of phenomenology to educational settings. The common point of these researchers is that conceiving students along the lines of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) *Dasein*, for instance, can lead to novel conclusions with regards to students’ educational experiences and their identities and selves in educational settings. Bonnett’s (2009) phenomenological study construes Western education institutions as “places of unselfing”. According to him, at Western institutions, the focus of learning is on the universal, which directs attention away from the particular and causes confusion with regards to the pupils’ own experiences and ways of being-in-the-world. Faced with general, institutional practices of evaluation, for example, which are in place at schools and universities, students go through a turn away from their own emplaced experiences. As detailed in the “Analysis and Findings”, the participants of the present study have expressed experiences that indicate their preference for evaluation based on independent research and writing. Since they see education as closely related to their identities, standard and traditional methods of evaluation seem to hinder the process through which they express themselves in their educational contexts. Translated into terms of identity, Western educational institutions prove to be places where students can feel “lost” and “displaced”, meaning that students can only occupy identity positions in which they feel “out of place”. In Bonnett’s view, “pathological unselfing” often occurs at schools because the environment is impoverished. Similarly, Barnacle’s (2009) essay, for instance, focuses on the bodily aspect of the learning

process, arguing, based on the phenomenological approach, that “learning must attend ultimately not only to the intellect but the whole person, and therefore, to transforming who we are as people” (p. 26). The wider implication of the argument is that phenomenological studies can informatively impact educational policies in, for example, guiding attention away from an abstractly rationalistic view and towards a theory that incorporates the student as a whole person, which has straightforward consequences for the study of student identities. All in all, phenomenological studies of education seem to have relevance for the study of student identities.

In a recent paper, Greasley and Ashworth (2007) argue that the process of learning, the studies of the individual student, takes place in front of the backdrop of the student’s lifeworld. Consequently, the two researchers indicate that understanding the process of learning and studying without paying attention to the lifeworld leads to an impoverishment of the interpretation.² Greasley and Ashworth’s paper shows an important development in pedagogical theory: for a rich understanding of the point-of-views of individual students and their experiences, it is essential to focus on the background before which the students’ learning activity takes place. Students do not become and remain students in a vacuum, in which they are separated from their previous experiences and their everyday life; rather, they bring a personal background with themselves to their educational activities. This background can be generally described as the lifeworld of the student, and it is by no means avoidable when it comes to understanding and interpreting their educational experiences. The shift to seriously consider the lifeworlds of students is analogous to a shift by Norton (e.g., Norton

² Skuza (2007) offers a phenomenological approach to the experience of acculturation also with a heavy emphasis on the lifeworld. In Skuza’s article, it is also explicit that the meaning of an experience such as acculturation can only be fully brought out by referring to the lifeworld and approaching the issue phenomenologically.

Pierce, 1995) that moved away from abstract theories of learning motivation to focusing on the connection between identity and education.

Norton's (Norton Pierce, 1995, 1997; Norton, 2000, 2006) work does not claim to be phenomenological, but it has been one of the most influential theories about the relationship between identity and education recently, and can possibly yield interesting insights in connection to a phenomenological approach. Incorporating poststructuralist views about the subject, Norton conceives of identities as fluid and multiple.³ Influenced by social constructionism among many other theories, Norton (e.g., 2000) has carried out qualitative research that has shown crucial connections between the identities of language learners and their social contexts. For instance, Norton (1995) sees motivation for language learning as not related to fixed personality traits but as a socio-cultural variable named "investment". Rather than explaining the motivation of language learners by making it a personality trait or stating that they have certain personality traits that determine it, Norton has argued that language learners invest into their social identity by learning a language. Through acquiring a new language, students invest into their social identities, actively "organizing and reorganizing the sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (p. 18). Building on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Norton has been able to apply the idea that language learning is an acquisition of cultural capital, capital that is symbolic; however, one that has similarly enabling and disabling powers to economic capital. Consequently, Norton's view has been influential in theorizing identities in connection to education and language.

Despite the lack of claim to be phenomenological, Norton's views can be seen as consistent both with the phenomenological framework of Husserl and Heidegger and with the phenomenological approach of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Regarding the former, Norton's

³ According to McNamara (1997), Norton relies on Tajfel's (e.g., 1982) Social Identity Theory, and also expands it by taking poststructuralist views of the subject and identity into account.

theory of identity in language learning can be seen as applying and modifying Heidegger's concept of "being-in-the-world". Since language learning does not take place in a social vacuum, the practices of language learning are connected to the way the students are "in-the-social-world". Motivation in Norton's reconceptualization, for instance, is not based on fixed personality traits but on the interplay between the social context and the particular student embedded in the social world. Concerning social constructionism, Norton seems to argue that the fluid and dynamic identities are social products, but she also sees the students in her studies as having active and agentive roles in negotiating "investments", for example, into these social products, which corresponds to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) statements about the mediating process between the individual and the social world.

Morita's (2004) qualitative research partly concerns how students in second language learning environments negotiate identities. Drawing on the concept of communities of practice, Morita explains the notion of identity as "situated and constructed" within a community of practice. For instance, in the second language learning case of her study, one form of identity is "being less competent than others", based on students' experiences or their views on how others perceive them. However, Morita argues that the findings demonstrate that the forms of identity should not be seen as passively accepted positions within a community of practice. In the study, students attempt to change and influence their positions, and so the identity is not merely externally ascribed but also individually and negotiated: "the same learner can negotiate different identities and participate variously in different contexts" (p. 596). By using the notion of identity, Morita explains that the positions students occupy are strongly influenced by the classroom context, for instance, but within a given context, there is room for individual negotiation of one's position. In this interactive model, the notion of identity works as an explanatory device analogously to the way the thesis defined identity as independent belonging. The various communities and contexts of belonging offer a

framework that is independently and individually negotiated by different people to create and occupy different positions.

From Postcolonial Identity to ELF

Given the history of Qatar in the Persian Gulf, it is useful to consider the implications of postcolonial theory in order to arrive at a richer picture of identities in the unique socio-cultural context of the country. In spite of the fact that the colonial period ended in Qatar, the consequences of it are wide-ranging. As Akkari (2004) states: “When colonization ended, a strong economic, cultural and political dependence on developed countries remained” (p. 144). Thus, the main tenet of postcolonial theory is that even though the per-se colonial period ended, imperialism and colonialism still linger in numerous social and cultural domains (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1994; Young, 2001).

The foci of the thesis, identity, language and education, are all themes treated frequently in postcolonial theory. Firstly, identity is addressed by Said (1994) in describing the source of identity as “combative” (p. xiii). Said is responsive to the connection between culture and power. He argues that colonialism has an afterlife in the cultural domain, and it follows that the domain becomes an arena where different cultural trends and discourses, supported by different regimes of power, engage in metaphoric battle. In Said’s view, identity is inseparable from culture, and so cultural identities are not “essentializations” but “contrapuntal ensembles” that require “opposites” and “negatives” (p. 52). Therefore the formation of identity, in postcolonial theory, is not a process of linear development in isolation, for instance, but rather identities are partly products of oppositional discourses that are prevalent in culture. For example, as discussed later (e.g., “Analysis and Findings”, 1.1), a Qatari student negotiates his or her identity dealing with the force of tradition and religion that gives enormous weight to Islam, Arab culture and the Arabic language, while also having to handle the influence of Western culture and the English language, which are supported by

globalization and its mediatory processes. Due to Qatar's colonial past, the Western cultural influences and the English language not only exercise their influence in the present but the lingering effects of the colonial past also strengthen prevalence of the socio-cultural forces.

In postcolonial theory, language and education are interconnected, most visibly in the practices of English language teaching. Pennycook (1998) dedicated a book to demonstrating how colonialist ideology dominates the enterprise of English language teaching. Influenced by Said (1994), Pennycook argues that colonialism has more subtle forces than the violent oppression or the economic abuse of the colonized nations, and he locates policies and practices of teaching English within this circle. As Pennycook's argument has important consequences for studying the identities of students in regions where there is significant colonial history and, at present, a dominance of the English language, it is worth to quote him at length:

Thus, although these students [in Hong Kong] generally have an unarticulated and ambivalent relationship to colonialism itself, the kind of ambivalences they seem to face with English echo many of the comments made about the postcolonial problematic of opposing the economies, political structures, cultures and languages of colonialism while at the same time doing so in and through a colonial language that has been part of one's social and educational life and which also allows access to a global audience (p. 213).

In the passage above, Pennycook's (1998) focus is on students in Hong Kong finding themselves in a complex postcolonial, bilingual situation. The issue is how they relate to colonialism and the English language. Pennycook's view is that there is no clear-cut line between submission and opposition; instead, the students have an ambivalent relationship to these phenomena that forms their identities and certain aspects of their lives and allows for a process of opening up and finding ways to communicate globally. The findings of the present

paper describe in detail how similar ambivalences can be observed with regards to Qatari students.

Canagarajah (1999) concurs with Pennycook (1998) about the importance of colonial history regarding English language teaching theory, ideology and practice. However, he finds the emphasis on this facet of the issue misleading in the sense that it does not take another historical trend into account. According to Canagarajah, there is a counter-trend that goes against the colonial forces that shape the global spread of English, namely the trend of resistance and appropriation. In Canagarajah's view, Pennycook says too little about the historical process in which the colonized countries develop native strategies of resistance towards colonial oppression, strategies that manifest on the level of language education and ideology. In spite of the fact that "English did not have to be brazenly 'imposed' [on the Tamil community in India that Canagarajah is interested in]" (p. 62) because its cultural and social pull made it attractive, local forms of resistance have developed. These forms of resistance were manifest in everyday activities that the colonized people carry out, "foiling the expectations" of their masters and educators (p. 64). To conclude: "locals were selectively appropriating the Western culture and values, while benefiting from the economic and social rewards from English education" (p. 65). Canagarajah's study is useful because it offers a framework for studying contemporary forms of English dominance in Qatar, and if understanding the dominance of English is possible not merely as a form of colonial oppression but as something that provides strategies of resistance, then the analyses of the present study might be enriched by such a conception. An example for these strategies of resistance is historical: in the 19th century, during the colonial project of the missionaries in Sri Lanka, they have attempted to create a "civilizing" British education system. In spite of the efforts of the missionaries to create native representatives of their faith, as Canagarajah describes, after gaining an English education, the natives did not become preachers but used

their English proficiency to gain government jobs: “whatever policies the colonists adopted, the locals carried out their own agendas” (p. 64).

Pennycook (1998) and Canagarajah (1999) are among many researchers who have written about English language teaching and its connection to cultural inequality, colonialism and unequal power relations. Atay and Ece (2009), for instance, discover an identity conflict with regards to students in Turkey who, due to the power of the English language teaching enterprise, develop an additional English identity. This diagnosis would indicate that these students go through a metaphorical split in their identities because they cannot seem to reconcile English and Muslim identities as one, but are also unable to give up either of the two. In addition, Saville (2007) examines three countries, South Africa, the Philippines and Peru, as case studies with regards to the language situation. He argues that the ideal goal of maintaining linguistic diversity is much harder to achieve in reality than its advocates believe it to be. He states that language is linked to wider economic and social issues that result in conflict between using indigenous languages and using English. If there is no respect for “local ecologies”, this conflict can prevent people from the benefits of linguistic diversity. All in all, examining the interconnections between language, colonialism, power and the wider social situations provides views that might be useful with regards to understanding how people experience related phenomena, and more specifically, it may illuminate how the situation plays out in Qatar.

English is the globally dominant language, which has prompted the emergence of the field of studying it as lingua franca (Baker, 2009; Boyle, 2011; Dewey, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Mauranen, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2007). One of the most important contributions of recent ELF research is a paradigm change regarding the concept of non-native speakers and ‘non-native’ language use. For example, Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) trace the development of the field, explaining that non-native speakers of English should not be considered as learning the

language on a linear scale towards ideal native speaker proficiency. Rather, from a *lingua franca* perspective, non-native speakers can be regarded as “highly skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs [native speakers of English], and who are found to prioritize successful communication over narrow notions of ‘correctness’ in ways that NSEs, with their stronger attachment to their native English, may find more challenging” (p. 284). In such a conception, as the researchers emphasize, it is essential to consider the social and cultural context in which the identities of these speakers are situated. On this view, English is not a monolithic language strongly connected to nation states. The ties to globalization make English a fluid, hybrid and flexible language, in which perspective English is at once globalized and globalizing. It is not the case that English is merely being spread by the forces of globalization, but that these forces create a diffuse global language situation. For example, in academic circles, at international universities, the practice of ELF is dominant, despite the language policies that tend to reinforce an outdated conception of English (Jenkins, 2011, 2012).

As a consequence, there seems to be a discrepancy between the institutional language conception and the way the students at international universities performatively and interactively negotiate the uses of ELF without necessarily paying attention to the native speaker standard. As Jenkins (2012) argues, it would be beneficial to introduce the theoretical framework of ELF into English language teaching, even though teachers who are comfortable with current practices might feel threatened or uneasy by this challenge to the traditional pedagogy. Jenkins reports that institutions that prefer standardized testing (IELTS, TOEFL) are unwilling to pay attention to the results of ELF research or to engage in a dialogue. Such a situation might be harmful regarding the variety of English backgrounds of the students being tested. Although Jenkins does not intend to “tell teachers what to do” (p. 492), she has some suggestion about how to incorporate an ELF framework. One of the suggestions is to assist in

the understanding of ELF through teacher education in which teachers could familiarize themselves with the concepts of this field and could decide for themselves whether or how to implement certain insights. As Dewey (2012) argues in a recent article, the notion of “postnormativity” could be used as a general framework for teachers “as a framework of choices available when deciding whether/to what extent/which (if any) language norms are relevant to their immediate teaching contexts” (p. 166).

Dewey and Leung (2010) describe that English is in the process of being transformed, and one aspect of this transformation is about ownership: “English (at least in one sense) belongs to whoever lays claim to it by taking possession of it through enacting the language resources for interactional purposes” (p. 4). The question of ownership is crucial regarding conceptualizations of English. In a non-ELF framework, the standards of English can be believed to be set by native speakers of the language in the United Kingdom and the United States. However, if the ownership of English does not belong to these countries, then they cannot claim authority over correctness and appropriateness. As Dewey and Leung (2010) observe: “English is appropriated through all the countless localizations of the language as it becomes molded in ways that best suit the specific purposes for which it is used, and mostly in contexts that will be very remote from its putative “home” ENL settings” (p. 4).

In Qatar, the role of ELF is emphatic. Due to historical, economic and demographic peculiarities, as previously mentioned, Qataris are a minority in their own country, which means that it is almost necessary to speak English in most of the social arenas as mentioned in the “Introduction”. Fishman’s (2007) passionate study about language loss points to one of the most pressing issues that researchers of ELF have to deal with, namely the conflict between English being a highly useful, global channel of communication, and the values that indigenous languages hold, not only as promoting linguistic diversity, but for the native speakers of these languages as well. There is an argument that English is not necessarily an

oppressive language that endangers the survival of indigenous languages. Instead, as Mahboob (2009) explains, in countries where English is the language of past colonization there are cases where the previously colonized people can make English their own (cf. Canagarajah, 1999). Looking at the case of Pakistan, Mahboob says that the use of English in Pakistan is not antagonistic to local languages and values; rather it is used in a way that it is able to represent resistance towards subtle and contemporary forms of colonization. Consequently, the main issue is whether English is a purely oppressing socio-cultural power in Qatar with regards to Arabic. The present study examines the relationship through interpreting the experiences of Qatari students, in whose lifeworlds both Arabic and English play a significant role. Since Smit (2010) states that “English as a lingua franca (ELF) as language of tertiary education amongst multilinguals in non-English-speaking areas seems to be here to stay” (p. 3), it is certainly relevant to investigate how the subjects of this education, the students, experience this state of affairs.

More generally, research into the nature of ELF would be incomplete without referring to the cultural framework in which it is embedded. As Baker (2009) states, the curious fact about English seems to be that there is not a single culture attached to it in a world that is increasingly globalized and interconnected. Each and every one of the users of English brings their own socio-cultural background into the interactions that take place in English, creating an interactive praxis that influences ELF. For those who participate, “it appears that rather than a focus on knowledge of specific cultures, what is needed is the ability to interpret, negotiate, mediate, and be creative in their use and interpretation of English and its cultural references” (p. 585). Basically what Baker argues for here is that since English is a lingua franca on such a global scale, it cannot be viewed as singularly the language of colonial oppression. The situation endows ELF with a degree of plasticity that opens up a space for individual negotiations and interpretations in the practices and discourses that involve English

in intercultural contexts (Dewey [2007], for instance, argues for a transformationalist perspective in conceptualizing ELF with attention to globalization).

Seidlhofer (2007), for example, proposes to rethink the interconnected concepts of variety and community in order to better understand the nature of ELF. In Seidlhofer's view, the rapid changes of the contemporary world prompt researchers of English to come up with new conceptual frameworks for analyzing the role and situation of English. The main argument is that "appropriate" English is not necessarily connected to native speakers and native speaker communities, but it is relative to the various contexts in which English is used. Similarly, Park and Wee (2011) underline the importance of thinking about ELF in a critical and interactive way, without accepting either that it is merely an instrument of assisting countries in joining global culture and economy or that it is a force that oppresses and extinguishes local traditions and cultures. They offer a way to criticize conceptualizing languages in a "monolithic" way, and more specifically to encourage a new understanding of ELF by conceiving it as an "activity type", one that cannot be circumscribed by referring to "participant roles" and "discourse patterns", and which would direct focus away from describing English as a "fixed variety" (pp. 369-371). Essentially Park and Wee mean to study ELF through paying attention to the social, economic and cultural environment of the practices that speakers of English are engaged in.

Pakir (2009), a scholar of World Englishes, outlines the general playing field for studying English.⁴ She finds that studying ELF is mostly concerned with "connectivity", with the way English has a pragmatic role of mediator and medium of communication between

⁴ The difference between ELF and World Englishes, which can be seen as complementary paradigms, is summarized by Dewey and Leung (2010): "World Englishes research situates the study of English geographically, while ELF research has begun to untie linguistic description from conventional notions of distinct groups of speakers" (p. 9).

people who do not have a common linguistic ground otherwise. It also seems that in Pakir's (2009) view, studying ELF is opposed to ascribing a cultural core to the English language, and that in its numerous varieties in use, it can be separated from its "linguacultural material" (p. 229).⁵ All in all, in Qatar, English is the colonial language of the past and also emphatically the lingua franca of daily communication. Taking both of these aspects into consideration reveals an intriguing situation that might affect the identities of Qatari students. The present study interprets the experiences of Qatari students with regards to these issues, inquiring whether English can be reconceptualized as ELF in the sociocultural context of lingua franca interactions that take place in Qatar. In the experience of the participants, does it follow from the dominance of English that it straightforwardly causes the demise of Arabic? Is it relevant that some researchers mentioned above underline the possibility of separating English from its mono-cultural conception (that would treat English exclusively as carrying the colonial ideology of the United Kingdom, for instance)? Can English be used in interactions and practices as an empowering language? What is the role of English in the experience of the participants of the study?

Qatari Identity: Dealing with ELF in the Arab world

A recent survey (Arab Youth Survey, 2013) conducted in the Arab region (in the countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Yemen) suggests a number of results that might be interesting for the present study insofar as the participants had to answer questions about pride, being an Arab, traditional Arab values and modernization, all aspects commonly linked to identity, which are central topics for the thesis. One of the most interesting findings is that

⁵ Smit (2010) outlines how the arena for thinking about ELF and the transmission of culture looks like: some believe that ELF comes without culture since it is an instrument of communication and not identification; others argue that it brings the mixed form of the cultures that participate in its use; finally, there are those who find that it creates new hybrid forms of language use in the cross-cultural mixing (p. 54).

Arab youth in the various regions take strong pride in their Arab identities following the events of the Arab Spring. As the study declares: “Nearly nine out of 10 young Arabs (87%) agree with the statement: ‘Following the events of the Arab Spring, I am more proud to be an Arab’. Out of that number 59% agree ‘a lot’ and 28% ‘somewhat agree’ with the statement” (p. 11). Moreover, most of the interviewed participants of the survey cite their parents, religion and family as the role models or guiding principles who influence them and the way they view their lives. The study also presents that four out of ten young Arabs agree that some traditional values are to a degree outdated, and they would embrace modernization in values and beliefs. According to the survey, this number increases every year they conduct the study. It seems to be an intriguing finding that there is a strong trend towards pride in Arab identity but there is also an increasingly important trend towards modernization. In this regard, the present study investigates if the participants express related views and if so, how they experience the clash or reconciliation between these trends. Now the results of the survey cannot be taken for granted when it comes to in-depth phenomenological interviewing; however, the thesis returns to the findings of the survey in the “Conclusion” when there is ground for the comparison of the results.

It seems to be a consensus in the literature that language, religion and culture are crucial constituents of identity (e.g., Edwards, 2009; Joseph, 2004). As Akkari (2004) states about religion and language in the Arab world: “First, Islam as the main religion and Arabic as the language are key factors in the identity formation of the region” (p.144). With regards to the region, Suleiman’s (2003) work explains the importance of language for national identity.

Formulations of Arab nationalism, whether embryonic or fully-fledged in character, are invariably built around the potential and capacity of Arabic in its standard form to act as the linchpin of the identity of all those who share it as their common language.

A positive and indissoluble link is therefore established between language and national identity in discourse of this type (p. 224).

Suleiman's argument is that in all forms of Arab nationalisms, there is a reliance on language as a connective medium between the people that circumscribe the group as it mediates the identity connected to Arab nationalities. Suleiman also finds a tension present in both nationalism and in related language use, as they tend to turn towards the past in looking for models to "valorize" and "authenticate" themselves. At the same time, they also aim at modernization, and this goal feeds back to the language itself to enable Arabic to be the medium through which modern Arab consciousness is sustained (p. 156).

This section's main avenue of inquiry can be stated in a general question: what is the relationship, in Qatar as part of the Persian Gulf, between identity and English and identity and Arabic against the backdrop of an increasingly globalized world? Mohd-Asraf (2005) argues, for instance, that "[i]t is possible to learn, and in fact, to be highly proficient in English and still maintain one's identity as a Muslim" (p. 116). As it has been described, there is a debate about the status and the impacts of ELF. The Persian Gulf offers a uniquely intriguing opportunity to examine this phenomenon. As Karmani (2005) states, the economic boom created by oil export motivates the "socio-economic" experiment of the Gulf States to catalyze the area's transition into the modern era. For this project, English has seemed to be the perfect tool. However, Karmani is also critical of the economic background that sustains the English teaching enterprise. He argues that English teaching in the Persian Gulf looks increasingly like the oil business, centered on Western English-speaking countries and that under these circumstances, the people of the Gulf cannot benefit from English proficiency and that the ability to use Arabic in coping with modernization and globalization is significantly diminished.

Troudi (2009) also expresses a pessimistic view about the effects of the dominance of English on Arab culture and the Arabic language in the United Arab Emirates. The essay calls for critical thinking with regards to English as a medium of instruction. The reason behind it is that creating a false belief that Arabic cannot be the language of sciences but only of traditions, for instance, marginalizes Arabic. Moreover, it is argued that the replacement of indigenous languages in education can lead to or is the first step towards a loss of cultural and linguistic diversity. In broader context, Troudi declares that there are numerous cases where English cannot be separated from its colonial history, and where English language education is used as a way of reinstating and emulating the ex-colonizer's model of education. All in all, both Karmani's (2005) and Troudi's (2009) views are pessimistic in conceptualizing English as it is associated with oppressive neo-colonialism. They see the spread of English as possibly initiating a loss of indigenous languages, especially where it replaces the native language as the medium of instruction.

To emphasize again, the present study is concerned with the experiences of Qatari students. Insofar as the focus is on the experiences, there is no way for it to address whether their situation is, in reality, as pessimistic as the aforementioned articles would indicate. However, it should be underlined that there is a more balanced picture that can be developed. As the "Analysis and Findings" chapter demonstrates, some Qatari students argue exactly for a more balanced view, being aware that the promotion of Arabic faces difficulties (while also calling for attention to the fact that it is a strange situation that Arabic needs to be promoted in an Arab country). Admittedly, having roots in the colonial period, English and its dominance as a lingua franca give rise to numerous worries in the Gulf with regards to the consequences for Arabic and Arab culture. The most intriguing aspect of the discussion surrounding the topic is that despite the emphasis on preserving the Arab culture and the Arabic language (Abi-Mershed, 2010; Kanan & Baker, 2006; Mazawi, 2008; Romani, 2009; Troudi 2009),

many of the studies argue that the English language is not necessarily a threat, but only perceived to be so (Randall & Samimi, 2010; Rostron, 2009; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002; Zakharia, 2010). Thus, the discourse about the impact of English in the Gulf is characterized by a basic tension: is the spread of English a threat to Arabic? Or to phrase it in more general terms, are globalization and Westernization (perceived in education as well as in other regiments of society) dangerous to the local Arab culture and traditions and to the Arabic language? As described earlier, some of the researchers (and a good number of governmental and educational organizations) believe so, while many argue that the threat and the danger are over-emphasized and do not represent the actual state-of-affairs. The present study deals with the experiences of students, and so its goal is not to present an argument for either side, but to describe how Qatari students perceive these issues. Whether they feel that English threatens the Arab culture or the Arabic language is presented in the “Analysis and Findings”.

Theories of ELF can also be employed to substantiate the claim that there are reasons why a more balanced picture than Karmani’s (2005) or Troudi’s (2009) seems more plausible. Without denying that there are strong connections in the Persian Gulf between the economic situation created by the oil boom and the enterprise of teaching English, it should be mentioned again that there are researchers working on ELF whose position is that ELF is not immediately identifiable with English as the mono-cultural medium of colonial oppression (e.g., Pakir, 2009). Concerning Saudi Arabia, Elyas and Picard (2010) devoted their study to show that a hybridity approach is the most beneficial for English pedagogy in Saudi Arabia. Similarly to theorists who believe that ELF should be conceived of as a hybrid that derives from cross-cultural interaction and practices, Elyas and Picard state that a hybrid English-language pedagogy would be the most beneficial, “which interrogates both traditional Islamic approaches and relevant Western practices and marries the best of these approaches to enhance teaching and learning” (p. 143).

To further pursue this line of thought, it is useful to refer to Kim's (2003) and Tan's (2005) articles on the Malaysian language situation. Without going into details, the core of Kim's argument is that Malaysia faces a complex postcolonial situation, in which investment (relying on Norton's [1995] notion) into a high-value language, such as English, does not bring immediate "returns or dividends" (p. 149). The reason for this is that in these situations, investment has to be masked sometimes in order to provide returns in a long run. Kim evokes the case of a student who encountered resentment on the side of local groups when she behaved in a directly Westernized manner (p. 144). To avoid such situations, investment into the English language and into a Westernized identity have to be covered up in a mixed identity construct. The situation is even more complex when one considers Tan's (2005) conclusions. Tan tries to direct attention to English being a Malaysian language that can play an essential role in the project of nation building instead of hindering it. In Malaysia, according to Tan, English is not only a necessity for competing on the international market but also a language that can foster national identity. So this argument evokes the views of researchers in the ELF debate who think that English can be indigenized. Both articles are important for this study's purposes, since by looking at Malaysia, they offer a way of approaching the complex role of English in countries like Qatar. Qatar is also a postcolonial society, in which, as the findings show, one can encounter resentment towards direct Westernized behavior or unnecessary use of English. On the other hand, because of the demographic peculiarities and the native-immigrant ratio in Qatar, it is not clear whether English can play a role in nation building or become a Qatari language.

This conclusion is similar to the results of Findlow (2006). With regards to English in the Middle East, the participants of Findlow encounter a difficulty because of diverse and contradictory social expectations. The general perception is that Arabic is the language of "authenticity" and "nostalgia", while English is the modern, internationally and globally

oriented language. Findlow is also a researcher who emphasizes hybridity, which is most effectively transmitted in higher education. Examining the United Arab Emirates, Findlow states that higher education has actually been a mediator for students who have to negotiate between the influences and the cultural impacts of both Arabic and English.

The ability to tap into bilingual resources, to use language (after Finlayson et al., 1998, p. 395) as both an ‘index of identity and a tool of communication’ is what has enabled citizens to negotiate rapid socio-political, cultural and economic change in the creation of appropriately hybrid, transitional collective identities (pp. 33-34).

Even if educational language policies do not encourage students to use their “bilingual resources”, it is shown in the results of the present study that they actually can and do so. This also means that they can be expected to successfully manage their hybrid identities. The present thesis investigates the issue of what the participants’ experiences show about the management of their identities in negotiating the influences of Arabic and English, Arab culture and Western culture.

Education is seen as an even more contested site because it is intimately tied to religion (particularly Islam) in the Arab world. Hussain (2004) concentrates on “Islam as a way of life”, and argues for the need of Islamic education in British Muslim communities. The main claim is that Islam should not be understood as confined to a special part of human life but as a religion that pervades all the aspects of it. Therefore the need for Islamic education is not borne by identity concerns but by the religion being the fundament of how one should live one’s life. In a more specific argument, Hatina (2006) actually does connect Islam and Islamic education with identity. The pursuit of knowledge is regarded in Islamic religious thought as “sacred”, and because Islam has strong moral, life-guiding principles, in Islamic education, religion is connected to the pursuit of knowledge and the way of life. In

face of the perceived challenges that Westernization brings forth, Hatina describes Islam and Islamic education as crucial components in regaining authentic Arab identity. Since all of the present study's participants expressed religion to be one of the most important, if not the most important, part of "who they are" or their identities, it is useful to consider how their educational experiences relate to their identities.

In Qatar, Kanan and Baker's (2006) study is one of the few to discuss the influence of international education on student identities. However, their study is quantitative, and so its conclusions are limited and can be contested or complemented by qualitative research insofar as they do not address the "why?" questions. Their study does not take into consideration the lifeworlds of the people who provide the data they are working with. In short, the individuals' backgrounds that would be necessary for understanding why they gave the answers they gave are ignored. Kanan and Baker's conclusions are, first, that there is a shift from religious identities to national, which "could very well be a function of social changes taking place in Qatar, especially within the last two decades. The general population has become more exposed to global influences, both economically and culturally" (p. 263). On the other hand, the present study demonstrates in the findings that Qatari students do not see themselves moving from religious to national identities, and moreover, they are explicit in stating that Islam is more important for them than nationality. Kanan and Baker's second conclusion is that the effect of international education might be a double-edged sword because the transition away from religious identity might lead to "social and political reverberations" (p. 265). According to them, students' identities are becoming less and less defined by religion. This statement is at odds with the experiences of the present study's participants, as it is shown in the findings. Kanan and Baker see the discrepancy as a cause of struggle for the students. The findings of the present paper signal, however, that the struggle that students experience is not related to the alleged shift from religious identities.

Rostron's (2009) study of liberal arts education in Qatar offers a different view that is more closely related to the findings of the thesis. Rostron sees the universities in Education City as part of "academic globalization" (p. 225) and she diagnoses a "clash of educational cultures" (p. 226) that Western universities in Qatar represent. Rostron acknowledges the views that present liberal education as a threat to authentic Arab culture; however, she attempts to argue for a balanced view that would be a "trans-cultural" liberal education, a liberal education that is adapted to the circumstances of Qatar. This would mean that Western education should not merely be transplanted into Qatar as it is, but it would have to be transformed as well in order to respect the socio-cultural situation to promote dialogue and mediation between forms of knowledge and knowledge-transmission, values and cultures.

Some of Rostron's (2009) assumptions and findings are in contradiction with the thesis. Rostron, referring to Al-Misnad's study from 1985, describes the prevalent view of education in Qatar as favoring "practical, tangible outcomes" and "extrinsic motivational forces" (p. 222). As the findings of the thesis state later, such an assumption is unwarranted as the educational situation in Qatar is very complex, especially laden with the complexities of the language situation. The prevalent perception of education in Qatar cannot be taken for granted, and as the thesis argues concerning the participants at least, the perception Rostron describes is not representative.

Altogether, considering the literature, the working definition of identity has to be revised. The usage of the concept of "independence" has been prompted by the findings (its frequent use by the participants); however, many aforementioned theorists and researchers offer grounds for thinking that this concept is too strong. Moreover, the phenomenological approach of social constructionism also points to social processes that make the usage of the term "independence" implausible. Instead of referring to independence, the thesis then conceptualizes identity as "negotiated belonging". The term negotiation is much better suited

to incorporate the insights of Sökefeld (2001) about the dual hermeneutics behind identity. Morita's (2004) study also indicates that negotiation is a better explanatory term regarding identity than independence because students in her study do not independently negotiate the classroom context but they do so actively as conscious agents. As a consequence, the methodology described below is designed to be able to investigate the notion of identity as negotiated belonging and whether it is a valuable explanatory device when it comes to experiences of Qatari students, who are embedded in a complex postcolonial and increasingly globalized situation where the dominance of ELF can be seen as a threat to Arabic and Westernization as a threat to local values. The issue in this situation is whether English is a purely oppressive force or a chance for Qataris to develop hybrid identities.

Summary

To sum up, the main theoretical pillars of the present study are phenomenology, hermeneutics and social constructionism. Building on its philosophical tradition, phenomenology provides a way for theorizing the participants' being-in-the-world as they negotiate their identities. Understanding participants as situated beings who act and form the world, and not as passive or merely objects in the world, is essential for the present paper to be able to account for their experiences. The hermeneutics of Gadamer, itself a descendant of phenomenology, assists the thesis in taking up the aforementioned conceptualizing of participants and applies this framework to the question of interpretation. How does the researcher understand questions, such as if a participant reports an experience? What about biases and reflexivity? Working hermeneutics into the theoretical background of the study provides a rigorous way of conceptualizing understanding and interpretation, which are crucial in an interview-based qualitative research. Lastly, Berger and Luckmann (1966) begin their theory of social constructionism by referring to phenomenology. In this respect, social constructionism is explicitly connected to the above-mentioned pillars of the thesis'

theoretical background. Adopting the main stance of Berger and Luckmann, namely that reality is socially constructed is useful for the present study because in discussing questions of identity, language and education, the social aspect is unavoidable. Considering the realities of the participants as formed by social processes offers a way for the thesis to examine the contexts in which the participants negotiate their identities, in the social arenas of their families, their educational institutions or in their wider society.

III. Research Strategy and Methodology

The main questions of this study revolve around the interplay between identity, language and education in Qatar. The motivation is partly provided by the intriguing socio-cultural situation of Qatari speakers of Arabic, as presented in the “Introduction”. Based on the reviewed literature, Qatar seems to be a country that provides opportunity to discuss the usefulness of the notion of identity; the influence of a socially constructed everyday reality; its relationship to the experiences of Qatari participants in a phenomenological framework; the impact of colonial history and the dominance of ELF; the educational contexts as arenas of enacting identities; and the role of the particular Arab cultural environment in which English is dominant. According to these considerations, the four research questions are the following:

1. How do Qatari students understand themselves and who they are? What are the most important factors in self-understanding and do they involve identity issues?
2. Is there a connection between identity and education for Qatari students? If there is, how do they experience the connection? If there is not, why not?
3. How do they experience academic achievement? Is academic achievement related to Qatari students’ self-understanding?

4. How do Qatari students experience the language situation in Qatar, and especially in relation to the themes of self-understanding, identity, education and achievement?

In order to devise a strategy for attempting to answer these questions, this study adopted a qualitative research methodology. The phenomena under investigation are experiences of Qatari students. The emphasis of qualitative research is on naturalism and interpretation (Cresswell, 2007). Consequently, the study focuses on “natural” experiences (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994), experiences which are rooted in everyday lives and shared lifeworlds and which are articulated during interviews. While it has to be acknowledged that the interview situation is an artificial one, insofar as it is an organized and premeditated encounter as opposed to a completely natural conversation, interviewing still should be conceived of as a method that can preserve the participants’ natural perspective (Duff, 2008; Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; McCracken, 1988; Schostak, 2006; Seidman, 2006; Stake, 1995). The main aim of the thesis is to offer valid and reliable interpretations of natural experiences. Interpretation in general is seen as a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1960/2004). Both the participants and the researcher have a socio-culturally situated and contextualized position, and in explaining the experiences of the participants, the participants and the researcher are conceived as co-producing the meanings of experiences. In this framework, what an experience means is not self-contained in the head of the one who has had the experience. In articulating an experience in the form of a story, for example, the articulation provides space for the negotiation of meaning. The audience, in this case the researcher, understands and interprets the articulation, which process should not be seen as a simple transmission of meaning but as a co-production of it because experiences have no self-contained meaning, but acquire it through communication and interpretation. Understanding the experiences of the participants, with regards to identities, academic achievement and language, has to proceed as a qualitative project because quantitative methodologies do not offer rigorous ways to account

for human perception and understanding. To assess situationality (Stake, 2010) and to reflexively concentrate on natural, lived experiences, a qualitative methodology is required. To summarize, “‘qualitative’ implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Sherman & Webb, 2003, p. 7).

Phenomenological Background for an Interview-based Qualitative Study

Following the definitions of Bryman (2008), the research has been conducted in an interpretivist-constructionist framework. Interpretivism is an epistemological stance in qualitative research, stating that the nature of studying human phenomena is different from that of the natural sciences. Instead of explaining (broadly construed) human behavior, the interpretivist researcher attempts to understand it. In interpretivism, the focus is on the meanings of human behavior, as it is told by the participants of the study and interpreted by the researcher. On the other hand, constructionism is an ontological position that should not be immediately equated with the social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1966). As Bryman (2008) explains, constructionists argue that, “social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (p. 19). It is thus related to social constructionism, but constructionism as explained by Bryman is an ontological position in qualitative research. As Guba and Lincoln (2005) state, constructionism is an antifoundationalist stance, which denies that there are objective, fixed and universal standards of truth. Instead, truth is seen to be produced within a community or dialogically through negotiations (p. 204).

Inspired by the works of Barnacle (2009), Bonnett (2009), Dall’Alba (2009a, 2009b), Ganeson and Ehrich (2009) in the field of education, the present study takes the work of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) phenomenology as a foundation for its theoretical background. By drawing on Heidegger’s work, the study focuses on the experiences of Qatari students and describes the way their lifeworlds appear to them, without having to address the issue whether

the world of their experiences is really as they describe it or not. The focus of the study is not on assessing the truth or falsity of the articulations of the participants but on explaining why they say what they say and how their expressions are related to their identities, the language situation in Qatar and academic achievement.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) summarize the relevance of phenomenology for social studies effectively: phenomenology conceives of consciousness as always directed towards an object (“intentional”). Different objects constitute different realities for consciousness. For example, consciousness is directed differently towards the reality in which it is immersed in a world of fiction than in the everyday world of projects and tasks. However, everyday life appears as a pre-ordered, pre-arranged, intersubjective reality organized around the present spatiotemporal point of the perceiver. So the reality of everyday life is “par excellence” reality, since it is distinguished and not just one reality among others (pp. 34-37). Thus, the basis of the sociology of knowledge is the relationship between consciousness and the reality of everyday life. On this view, the phenomenological approach to experiences is necessary for the study of the workings of society because the reality of everyday life is a social construction. For this research, phenomenology is therefore useful in exploring how social processes operate with regards to the identity constructions of Qatari students through their experiences.

The thesis is a discussion of an interview-based study that is concerned with the experiences of the participants as they express them in a face-to-face interview situation. Conceiving the roles of the participants phenomenologically means that the study assumes that the participants are not merely mental observers contained in their space-time regions, but that they are pre-reflexively and pre-theoretically engaged with the world. This prior engagement is seen to be manifest in their experiences of their environment, circumstances and situation. Thus, Heidegger’s novel concept of *Dasein*, as introduced earlier, grounds the

methodology insofar as this study conceives of participants as “beings-in-the-world” in his phenomenological framework. The participants are seen as moodfully engaged with a world that they understand through their own perspectives, which are expressed through language. Consequently, the expressions of their experiences are also seen in this light, meaning that their expressions are indicative of their ways of “being-in-the-world”, which is disclosed in the interviews. Pollio, Henley and Thompson (1997) describe the phenomenological interview “as an almost inevitable procedure for attaining a rigorous and significant description of the world of everyday human experience as it is lived and described by specific individuals in specific circumstances” (p. 28). As many theorists argue, the well-established philosophical mode of inquiry, phenomenology, can be of assistance to qualitative research that is concerned with lived experiences (e.g., Creswell, 2007; Langdridge, 2007; Spinelli, 2005).

In order to complement Heidegger’s philosophical approach, the study draws on the influential theory of social constructionism, based on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Berger and Luckmann state that knowledge gets established as reality by social processes. Their proposed method for describing the foundations of such knowledge in everyday life is phenomenology. To rephrase the Heideggerian framework above, “being-in-the-world” is always “being-in-the-social-world” in which world people are pre-theoretically immersed, by which the theorists mean that people naturally take their social reality for granted as reality before they could adopt any theoretical or reflective stance about the nature of social phenomena.

As Heidegger points out, in our everyday practices we are entwined with our world and we interpret ourselves in terms of the reflected light of that world, but we are also entwined in traditions that tend to cover over what is being passed on down the generations (Dall’Alba, 2009a, p. 44).

People experience and understand their reality on a pre-reflexive level; however, this reality is constructed by social processes that *seem* to organize and structure the reality independently of the people. These processes work in and through people who transmit bodies of knowledge between or in generations: the paradigmatic type of interaction is face-to-face interaction in language and this type of interaction is conditioned by the social structure. For the purposes of the study, the theory above assists in understanding how Qatari students are influenced by and participate in their socially constructed reality that they experience and know.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the workings of constructive social processes become apparent when interruptive problems arise regarding the pre-theoretically known reality. It is these problematic aspects that assist in uncovering the social processes behind the construction of reality. Berger and Luckmann begin with the phenomenon of social relativity: the everyday reality for people with different cultural and social backgrounds is seen to be different. This is a fundamental clash that can only be resolved by relying on the sociology of knowledge: “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product” (p. 79). Therefore, people not only passively experience the socially pre-organized reality but by doing so, they are actively engaged in producing and reproducing it. If problems arise within the socially created body of knowledge, the processes of creation might be uncovered and can be called into question. There are differences in “typificatory schemes” (p. 45) by which people apprehend others, transmitted by the different forms and uses of language due to the different social structures of their societies. As a consequence, there are different “social stocks of knowledge” (p. 56), knowledge that is taken for granted by those who participate in them, and different institutionalizations with varying histories behind them. For instance, as the “Analysis and Findings” chapter demonstrates, there is a difference in the “social stocks of knowledge” regarding the quality of Arab and Western education between students who have spent time studying abroad and students who have not.

Interpretive Framework

In Bryman's (2008) words, "[a]n approach to the analysis of texts like qualitative content analysis can be hermeneutic when it is sensitive to the context within which texts were produced" (p. 533). It is in this sense that the interpretive framework for the present study draws on hermeneutics to employ its constructionist-interpretivist stance in the analysis of the data. However, sensitivity to context is a quality that is more easily said than achieved. For this reason, there is a need for a theoretical background that creates a foundation for conceptualizing the interpretive process. In an interview-based qualitative study, there are at least two levels of interpretation. First, the participants understand and interpret the world they live in and express their understandings and interpretations in the interviews. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) succinctly put it: "Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (p. 349). Secondly, the researcher has to understand and interpret what the participants say while the utterances of the participants themselves express prior understandings and interpretations. In order to deliver a valid and reliable picture, there is a need for a theoretical background that makes the processes of interpretation intelligible.

The thesis draws on the hermeneutics of Gadamer (1960/2004) in interpreting the lived experiences of the students. In a hermeneutic theory, the interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants can be seen as a "fusion of horizons". In Gadamer's view this means that because of the historical, social and cultural embeddedness of the interpreter and what is being interpreted, they both have a particular horizon, a perspective that influences the process of interpretation. The researcher has a certain perspective with regards to understanding the experiences of the participants, just as the participants have a perspective on their lifeworlds. In the dialogical interview situation, these perspectives interact, and there

is a revision and a co-production of a new meaning. There is a need for a communicative back-and-forth between interpreter and interpreted, researcher and participant for the meaning of the experiences to emerge. For this back-and-forth, Gadamer's (1960/2004) hermeneutics provides a solid theoretical background (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Since there is no understanding without interpretation and vice versa in Gadamer's (1960/2004) theory, it must be applicable to the situation and circumstances of Qatari students who are embedded in a unique socio-cultural and bilingual context. Applying Gadamerian hermeneutics, this mentioned context gives them a "horizon" that is productive in understanding and interpreting their lifeworlds. As described above, the students have certain historically, socially and culturally influenced perspectives. Generally, the students have a particular horizon which influences how they interact with their lifeworlds and how they understand them. The objects in the students' lifeworlds also have horizons that are socio-cultural and historical contexts. These contexts are dynamic and changeable but they can be easily seen as established due to the heavy impact of society, culture and history on the individual. Understanding and interpretation are processes that can be described as "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1960/2004). What happens in understanding is an interaction and a co-production of meaning between the interpreter and the interpreted. In understanding the objects of their lifeworlds, the students are co-producers of meanings through their experiences. As a consequence, these meanings are the ones that they share in the interviews with the researcher.

The interviews and the data analyses belong to the second level of interpretation that the thesis has to account for based on Gadamer's (1960/2004) theory. Just as there is a fusion of horizons in the way the students understand their lifeworlds, there is one in the researcher's interpretation of the understandings they share. The students have their own horizons, shaped by their socio-cultural and historical context, and the researcher has a particular horizon as

well. This means that the participants become objects of interpretation: the researcher intends to understand and interpret the experiences of others through the articulation of these experiences. This should not be taken to mean that the researcher objectifies the participants in any way. Rather, in such a theory, the participants indeed become “co-researchers” (cf. Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 1997) because the interviews and their analyses are seen as co-productions of meaning between the interviewer and the interviewees: fusion of horizons.

The conducted interviews provide plenty of examples for the process of co-production of meaning and for conceiving the participants as co-researchers. For instance, the student of the School of Foreign Services at Georgetown University (personal communication, September 30, 2012) expressed a view that the “majority of the best universities are...English...or...you know...umm...”, to which I replied, “The perception is they are English.” However, the participant was satisfied neither by what she said, nor by my comment, so she continued: “Yeah...or not necessarily English or English-American, but...”, at which hesitation point, I intervened: “Western”, which the participant accepted: “Yeah, Western.” This is a simple example of how the process of co-producing meaning occurs in interaction. In this particular case, through interaction, the interviewee corrected her expression of her thoughts, but there are countless more overt examples of this process in the form of looking for a translation of an Arabic phrase to English or searching for book titles, or discussing relevant literature. The participant and I have arrived together at the understanding of what she expressed through language.

In Gadamer’s (1960/2004) hermeneutics, the medium of language plays a pivotal role. “All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter’s own language” (p. 390). Returning to the two levels of interpretation described before, this passage can be applied as the following. In an interview situation, the participants share their

understandings of their lifeworlds in a dialogical situation. In linguistically forming their understandings, they actively create understandings and interpretations by expressing them and not merely share pre-existing understandings. Consequently, the way the participants understand the world and the way in which I interpret their understandings are interconnected in the dialogical situation. On one hand, the participants acquire new understandings of their experiences in the dialogical situation with me, while I acquire an understanding of the already-understood experiences of the participants. In such a case, the meaning of the experiences is co-produced by the participants and me in the dialogical engagement.

The thesis therefore operationalized hermeneutics in conceptualizing the participants, conducting the interviews and analyzing the data. First of all, the participants are conceptualized for the sake of the research as persons who are in a hermeneutical engagement with the world, meaning that they do not only occasionally understand this or that but in general, they understand when they have experiences. Understanding is universal. In other words, the thesis treats the participants as persons who, through interviews, share the way they are in the world, the way they experience and understand it. Secondly, in conducting the interviews, I had to keep this in mind to avoid objectifying the participants, and treat them as persons who understand the world with personal perspectives. Additionally, as a consequence of Gadamer's emphasis on the co-construction of meaning, I refrained from trying to capture what the participants mean "by themselves" or "objectively". Rather, hermeneutics urges the researcher to acquire reflexivity in order to be aware of the contribution that he or she brings into the research process. In this respect, operationalizing hermeneutics assisted in developing reflexivity about the construction of the meanings. Thirdly, this reflexivity had to be sustained in the analysis process, as I had to be aware of my own perspective in coding the data and in interpreting the data, which meant that I had to double check whether my own biases and pre-judgments distorted what the participants had expressed.

During the interviews, the participants and I participated in a mutual and shared process of arriving at an understanding of their experiences. In a sense, we have co-constructed the meaning of their experiences in the dialogical engagement of the interview process. During the analysis, this co-construction had to be acknowledged in order to come up with trustworthy coding, and so Gadamer's hermeneutics influenced the coding processes (see p. 57, data analysis/coding).

Participants

The selection of the participants was criterion-based and purposive (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994). The criteria are the following: they are Qatari national, senior university students whose first language is Arabic but who are also sufficiently proficient in English. Qatari nationals were chosen to participate in the study because of their intriguing socio-cultural situation as described in the "Introduction". It is useful to choose university seniors because they can reflect on the whole of their university experience. Also, by senior year they have sufficient experiences regarding academic achievement that they can share. Lastly, the interviews are conducted in English, but it is not only for this reason that there is a need for a good command of the English language. In order to examine the complicated bilingual situation in Qatar and of Qatari students, there is a need for students whose vernacular is Arabic and who are proficient in English because they can provide data regarding the consequences of the language situation (the advantages/disadvantages of English proficiency, the role of Arabic in their lives and studies, etc.).

Senior students were selected from parallel programs at Qatar University and Qatar Foundation universities: one senior from Georgetown University (School of Foreign Services) and one senior from Qatar University (International Affairs); one senior from Northwestern University (Communications/Journalism) and one senior from Qatar University (Mass Communications). A senior student of engineering of Texas A&M was already identified and

interviewed in a previous study. He has served as the quasi-longitudinal base for the thesis as he was interviewed again.⁶ For the purposes of anonymity, the participants are referred to throughout the study as follows: the student from Georgetown University as **GUS** (personal communication, September 30, 2012), the student from Northwestern as **NUS** (personal communication, October 4, 2012), the engineering student of Texas A&M as **TUS** (personal communication, March 9, 2011, October 2, 2012), the student of International Affairs from Qatar University as **IAS** (personal communication, October 18, 2012), the Mass Communications student from Qatar University as **MCS** (personal communication, October 16, 2012). However, the intention is not to identify students with their institutional affiliation, only to protect their anonymity and signal where they conduct their studies. Selecting participants from parallel programs at the national and at an international university allows the study to account for the differences in achievement and identity by referring to the differences between educational environments and programs. Summed up in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Information about participants

Acronym	Gender	University	Program
GUS	Female	Georgetown	School of Foreign Services
NUS	Female	Northwestern	Communication/Journalism
TUS	Male	Texas A&M	Engineering
IAS	Male	Qatar University	International Affairs
MCS	Female	Qatar University	Mass Communications

Data Collection

⁶ The initial research plan was to establish a longitudinal core with reinterviewing the participants from last year's study; however, due to practical difficulties of approaching the same students, this plan had to be revised.

The primary method of data collection was interviewing. This seemed the most appropriate method because, firstly, the focus of the study is Qatari students' experiences regarding identity, languages and academic achievement. Secondly, one of the contributions of the study is that it examines these phenomena from a student-based perspective (Wiggan, 2007). As phenomenologically oriented researchers describe, the interview is the main procedure for capturing and interpreting the participants' own perspective on their experiences. Pollio et al. (1997) label interviews concerned with the participants' experiences phenomenological interviews, while Langdridge (2007) argues that phenomenological research mostly uses a semi-structured interview format.⁷ All in all, the interview is generally considered to be the most informative qualitative data collection method (e.g., Kvale, 1996; McCracken, 1998; Richards, 2003; Schostak, 2006; Seidman, 2006; Stake, 2010), and the study examines the experiences of the participants as they have expressed them.

The interviews are in-depth (Marvasti, 2004) and designed to be focused (Yin, 2003) and semi-structured (Langdridge, 2007). The mixed design (the "interview guide approach" in Cohen et al., 2007) reflects the delicate balance that has to be struck: the interviews have to provide data regarding the research interests, but at the same time, they have to be as free-flowing and natural as possible (following Potter [2004], the interview situation is conceived as one in which a natural conversation takes place). Firstly, the present study has well-defined research interests and questions. Thus, it is essential that the data collection provides the study with data that can be interpreted and analyzed in order to answer the research questions or to change the research perspective because of the details and complexities that are uncovered during the research process. The analyses can also give rise to additional questions, unveil

⁷ "This approach to interviewing has a long history in psychology and represents a trade-off between consistency and flexibility that best meets the needs of many qualitative researchers. Consistency is maintained through the use of an interview schedule consisting of a series of questions and prompts designed to elicit the maximum possible information" (Langdridge, 2007, p. 65).

related issues or necessitate the reformulation of the original questions if they are deemed as inadequate in approaching the experiences of the participants. Secondly, in a phenomenological study, the researcher is concerned with everyday experiences in the natural lifeworlds of the participants. Such experiences are difficult to share in an artificial interview situation: the spontaneity of the interview structure is reflected in the spontaneity of the participants' articulations (cf. Kvale, 1996). Consequently, there is a need for a focus and a structure, while the focus and the structure should not inhibit the naturally free-flowing character of the conversation that takes place (for the interview design see the "Appendix A" on pgs. 173-175).

The interviews lasted around an hour (Langdrige, 2007), the exact time varying from participant to participant. The audio of the interviews was doubly recorded by digital recorders. The interviews took place in public areas at the students' respective university campuses to create a relaxed and respectful atmosphere for the participants. Since the interviews, the audio files have been stored on my personal computer and were transcribed before the coding and analysis. The transcriptions are strict verbatim, and so in quoting them, the idiosyncracies of spoken language are represented along with expressions and linguistic structures that, from a Standard English point of view, would be regarded as "erroneous" or "deviant" language use. The reason for this is that English, strictly speaking, is not the native language of the participants. "Correcting" and editing the language use of the participants would be a misrepresentation because it would fail to represent the actual language uses of the participants, and the study has aimed to keep the representations as authentic as possible since it is an inquiry into non-native speakers' experiences regarding language, among other topics. In this, the thesis makes a conscious choice to adhere to the ELF framework, and represent English not as a fixed, central variety but as a global language that people with different native languages can make their own.

The data from the interviews is supplemented by contextual non-participant observations at the campuses of the respective universities. The purpose of the observations is to provide data about the educational environment and the circumstances of the participants, such as the buildings and facilities of the universities, the furniture and equipment, information signs and decorations, and so on. In order to understand their experiences, it is helpful to acquire data with regards to the place where they are engaged in educational activities. Since the thesis investigates the interconnections between identity, language and education, it is highly useful to be able to grasp the educational surroundings of the participants. The thesis is concerned with everyday experiences, and observing the situation where most of the relevant experiences occur can lead to insights that assist in the interpretive process when it comes to understanding the experiences about education at the students' campuses. I recorded the observations by using a digital audio recorder and by using detailed field notes.

Data Analysis

Coding. The analysis of interview data begins with a development of coding. The coding procedure is a priori and inductive at the same time (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interviews are semi-structured and focused, in which I have a number of concepts and areas of interest that are brought into the discussion. Consequently, the data is, on the one hand, coded along the lines of pre-existent patterns of thinking. "A priori" here stands for "before empirical investigation": I approach the field with an initial position with regards to questions of identity, language, education and achievement in Qatar. Having spent more than a decade as a teacher in the Gulf, I have acquired an informed outlook on the aforementioned issues.

In terms of coding, the hermeneutical background means that the a priori codes can and must be complemented with inductive coding: analyzing the interview data provides

notions and concepts that emerge from the participants themselves. Thus, in blending the a priori and inductive ways of coding, this method reflects the thesis' theoretical-hermeneutical underpinnings. The categories that are developed in the coding process encompass both the participants' and my perspectives, which is in accordance with the general stance of interpretive qualitative research.

Interpretation. The data analysis can be also conceived of as a hermeneutical process between the data and the concept of identity. One of the main aims of the research is to suggest a concept of identity (as negotiated belonging) that can be usefully employed in such complex multicultural and bilingual settings as Qatar. However, the concept is not a mere theoretical abstract but should be and is informed by the actual lifeworlds and situations in which it should be applied. Therefore there is a hermeneutical and interpretive back-and-forth between the identity concept and the data that is collected through participants regarding their identities. The most important purpose of the analysis is to test the applicability of identity as negotiated belonging while continuously refining it during the analytic process. The resulting findings are products of treating the data on their own terms and employing a concept that not only fits the data but also enjoys a degree of transferability.

Social Constructionism. The theory that substantiates the investigation of identity is Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionism. As previously described, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory is built around the thesis that reality is a social construction. In practice, the study employs this understanding in analyzing the interview data, since one of the most important aspects of social constructionism is its stance towards language:

"Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen" (p. 51). Language here is fundamentally connected to everyday life and is the primary medium of transmitting social stocks of knowledge that are accepted as reality, and through language people can establish and communicate their participation in these social

stocks. In analyzing their expressions, this study describes how they take part in constructing and constituting the social reality that they are embedded in. In expressing themselves about their identities, Qatari students also express the ways their social realities are created.

The Move Away from Validity, Reliability and Generalizability

Since the study is carried out in an interpretivist-constructionist framework, it seems appropriate to replace the traditional notions of validity, reliability and generalizability with more adequate alternatives suggested by the methodological literature. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe, in constructionist ontology “[t]erms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (p. 24). The main motivation behind such a move is a thoroughgoing critique of positivist theoretical backgrounds, which are seen as inadequate for dealing with the phenomena of social scientific qualitative research. As Bryman (2008) explains, the categories of validity, reliability and generalizability seem to be inapplicable to the subjects with which qualitative research deals.

Seeing the categories of validity and reliability as containing a view that social reality has a unique objective account and that absolute truths can be discerned about the social world, some employ the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Bryman, 2008), which provides an alternative. Trustworthiness is made up of four different criteria. Credibility replaces internal validity, and it refers to the believability of findings and whether the researcher followed the canons of good practice, submitting the end product to the participants who have had the chance to offer feedback. Transferability replaces external validity, and the question becomes whether the findings are applicable to other contexts. For this criterion, the constructionist research has to provide “thick descriptions”, rich accounts of the unique phenomena in their context, so it allows others to judge whether they are transferable at all. Dependability replaces reliability in asking for the likelihood of the

findings applying at other times. To fulfill dependability, the researcher has to be able to present a full and detailed account of all the phases in the research process, and others have to be able to assess if proper practice has been followed and whether theoretical inferences are justified. Confirmability replaces objectivity, recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible in these matters. The fulfillment is assessed by judging whether the researcher has acted in good faith or not and seeing if his or her personal values, biases and so forth have entered into the interpretation in a distorting manner. All in all, these categories seem to be more suited for interpretivist-constructionist research.

Although Susan Chase (2005) is concerned with narrative inquiry in qualitative research, some of her insights can be applied to this study. According to Chase, narrative inquiry demands a different conceptualization of criteria for research. Similarly to narrative researchers, who reject the generalizability of narrative meanings to a certain populations, the present study also conceives of criteria differently. More specifically, Chase's contention that Western narrative researchers have to be reflective about their socio-cultural embeddedness and their concepts of identity and self can be taken up here. In this respect, the analyses of the present study have paid attention to the socio-cultural differences and neither intended to universalize Western assumptions about the aforementioned concepts, nor aimed to generalize the results about the findings. In Chase's words, "From this perspective. any narrative is significant because it embodies-and gives us insight into-what is possible and intelligible within a specific social context" (p. 667). The shared experiences of the participants provide similar insights, with emphasis on the specificity of the social context. This specificity plays an important role in awareness about socio-cultural contexts and their differences during the research process and in setting up the relevant criteria for assessment.

In phenomenological research. As Spinelli (2005) states: "In general, the overall aim of phenomenological research is to provide increasingly adequate meaning statements rather

than final laws or uncontestable truths” (p. 135). Following these developments, the trustworthiness of the conclusions of the thesis depends on whether the meanings that have been reached in the end are accurate representations of the experiences and views of the participants. The study is concerned with the experiences of the participants, so the question of plausibility is the following: does the study accurately represent the dialogic encounter between the researcher and the participants? Creswell (2007, referencing Polkinghorne, 1989) summarizes some points about criteria for phenomenological findings:

- the description has to truly reflect the participants’ experiences;
- the transcribed text has to convey the meanings of the oral interview;
- the possible alternative conclusions based on the analysis has to be identified;
- the generalizability of the conclusions has to be assessed;
- the philosophical tenets of phenomenology has to be understood;
- the phenomenon under investigation has to be well-bounded; the procedures of data analysis have to be rigorous;
- the study has to convey the essence of the participants’ experiences;
- the researcher has to show reflexivity (pp. 215-216).

All in all, the trustworthiness of findings based on experiences of participants is an intriguingly complex issue.

The paper offers interpretations of the participants’ experiences and the question is whether these interpretations are trustworthy. For this, rigorous and appropriate methods are needed and the results need to be plausible and illuminating. Analyzing and interpreting data, drawing on a solid phenomenological-hermeneutical background for interpretive-qualitative research, achieve rigor and appropriateness. The trustworthiness is attained by the reflexivity of the researcher and in treating the utterances of the participants on their own terms, without enforcing any taken-for-granted meaning on what is articulated.

The dependability of the methods, codes and results are sought in a number of ways. In general, all of the phases of the research process are available for scrutiny. Otherwise, first of all, high-quality digital audio recorders doubly recorded the interviews. Secondly, the verbatim transcriptions were written with extreme care to preserve the real-time, face-to-face flow of the interviews. The transcriptions are also sent to the participants, so they can check and request changes in case they have objections, which not only enhances dependability but is also an important ethical measure. The dependability of the interview method is ensured by the interview design that can be checked (see “Appendix A” pgs. 173-175), and the dependability of the coding is maintained by “independent coding” (cf. Thomas, 2003, p. 7), meaning that an independent coder scrutinized the transcriptions and the developed codes. All in all, while the notions of natural scientific validity and reliability cannot be directly applied to qualitative-interpretive research into human phenomena, the thesis took serious steps in order to present its methods and findings as plausible and dependable.

Transferability. The main focus of the study is to investigate how the selected participants experience identity, achievement and their complex socio-cultural and bilingual situation. As such, it is not one of the primary goals to generalize the results. Similarly to the concepts of validity and reliability, generalizability in qualitative-interpretive research is a contested notion (cf. Richard, 2003, pp. 287-289). Langdridge (2007), for instance, says that research in hermeneutic phenomenology is likely to be “idiographic” (p. 58). This means that the purposive nature of sampling in these studies goes against the trend to generalize the findings and results of the study beyond the group of participants. Stake (2010) also emphasizes the situationality of qualitative research: qualitative studies concentrate on particular phenomena in particular contexts. However, according to Stake, generalizations are almost inevitable intuitively. Therefore, since the study might provide insight for other researchers in the field, it is one of the tasks to offer a basis of evaluation to decide which

aspects can be of use and which can be transferred to different contexts. The present study is designed to add to the academic stock of knowledge by offering detailed analyses and carefully researched individual cases which focus on the complexities of language and identity for Qatari university students.

As a consequence of these considerations, the thesis uses the concept of transferability (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The concept of transferability replaces generalizability or external validity in the following way. The question about qualitative inquiry is not whether its results can be generalized to cover different numerous cases but whether its audience has the ground for deciding if its framework or findings can be transferred to different but equally well-specified contexts. Accordingly, the thesis offers rich description of the participants' experiences in a solid phenomenological framework that provides sufficient information for its audience to assess its transferability.

Ethical Considerations

After obtaining ethical approval, the participants were provided with information regarding the study and with a consent form to confirm their participation. Besides the official ethical criteria, first and foremost, I had to be able to demonstrate adequate cultural sensitivity. Not only because culture permeates the research topics and interviews, but also because the research involves cross-cultural situations between the researchers and the participants. With twelve years of experience living in the region and thoroughly reviewing the literature on the cultural issues of qualitative research in general and also those that pertain to the study, I have effectively prepared for the task. I am a Western male, speaking from the position of authority, while the participants are Arab Qatari nationals and students. Cultural sensitivity, among other factors, helps to achieve balance in this unequal interactional situation.

However, the inequality stemming from the cultural differences is not the only one. The self-reflexivity requirement of qualitative research also raises awareness to other ethical issues regarding inequalities. Since I am a teacher, the interview process presents a doubly unequal power dynamic between research and participants. To balance the power inequality between the participants and me, the participants have been treated as co-researchers and will be ensured that they are voluntary participants in a shared investigation (Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 1997). Also by emphasizing my position as a fellow student in a Doctoral program, the standard power inequality between teacher and student can be neutralized. Balancing these power inequalities assists in encouraging the participants to authentically present them and helps me to adequately capture their self-presentation.

Thirdly, the participants are aware that their contributions are anonymous and voluntary, that they are free to cancel the interviews or the interview process at any time, that they can review and edit the transcripts and that they can withdraw their data before inclusion in the final report. These measures not only ensure that the ethical guidelines are followed but hopefully balance the unequal power dynamics, granting power to the participants over the process.

As Langdridge (2007) explains, there is an additional ethical issue with regards to phenomenological research: the invasion of privacy. "Invasion of privacy does not occur only with observational methods of course. It is also a possibility when interviewing if an interviewer is not sufficiently sensitive to a participant and the participant's desire to not talk about particular issues" (p. 63). Since the interview design is semi-structured (see the "Appendix A" pgs. 173-175) and the interviews are conceived as quasi-natural conversations, the design itself does not guarantee that the privacy of the interviewee is not invaded. Similarly to maintaining cultural sensitivity, it is my task as a researcher to refrain from invading the privacy of the interviewee. Being a Doctoral student and a teacher with years of

experience working in the Persian Gulf, I am well suited to demonstrate the required sensitivity in interviewing Qatari university students. The student-and-teacher experience in the Gulf not only grounds my cultural sensitivity, but also offers a solid foundation for recognizing when a research participant is hesitant or uncomfortable to talk about a certain topic, issue or experience. All in all, following the ethical guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (2011) and The British Association for Applied Linguistics (2006), being familiar with the ethical issues of phenomenological research and the cultural issues that are at stake, I was careful not commit any ethical breach that would threaten the study or its participants.

IV. Analysis and Findings

Coding

The present study employs a phenomenological methodology in approaching its subject matter, which mainly consists in the experiences of Qatari university students with regards to identity, language, education and achievement. For the purposes of a phenomenological study, the crucial data collection method is interviewing. The data yielded by the interviews is coded afterwards. As it has been described in the “Research Strategy and Methodology” section, the coding procedure was both a priori and inductive that corresponds to the hermeneutical theory of interpretation. The coding procedure is well worked-out by researchers who adopt phenomenological methodology. First, there is a need for the researcher to immerse themselves in the data, to read and re-read the interviews as many times as possible. Secondly, the interview data need to be organized along thematic categories, mainly by extracting those phrases and expressions that are most relevant to the research interests. The present study considers a number of a priori codes as the starting point for exploring thematic categories (such as “Community and Communal Belongings”) in the interviews. Thirdly, the researcher has to carefully interpret the identified “significant

statements” (Spinelli, 2005, p. 136) of the participants in order to ascribe valid meaning to them.⁸ During the reading and rereading process, it has become clear which statements carry the most weight for the participants. These significant statements are quoted and analyzed below as much as the scope of the chapter allows. Fourthly, the thematic categories have to be compared and contrasted through all the interviews to find the shared expressions of experiences that serve as foundations for codes. In this step, by comparing and contrasting the five interviews, I have identified the shared expressions of experiences, which have become inductive codes that gave the foundation for the subcategories of the a priori categories. Fifthly, as demonstrated below throughout the chapter, the codes provide the basis for the analysis as they contain and refer to the themes of the interviews, and the analysis proceeds by outlining logical, interpretive connections between themes and reordering them in a coherent fashion (Langdridge, 2007; Madsen, 2009; Peters, 2010; Spinelli, 2005). All in all, the coding was done in line with the phenomenological approach.

The main section of the current chapter proceeds along the thematic lines identified in the coding process. **First**, one of the main topics on which the participants expressed their experiences is about community and communal belongings. The smaller thematic units that underpin this main category are the experiences relating to family and religion, to Qatar and nationality, to being an Arab, and to being part of humanity in a global sense.

The **second** major category is the “Identity in Education” theme. The minor units of the second main category are *first*, seeing education as an arena of self-development and self-

⁸ “This step is difficult to delineate precisely since it involves the researcher’s creative ability to intuit what has been stated specifically so that he or she might extract its implicit or foundational meaning. This is a precarious step because it involves moving beyond the explicit statement yet at the same time staying with the meaning contained within the statement so that the connections between both remain clear and concrete” (Spinelli, 2005, p. 140).

expression; *second*, in self-development and self-expression, the most important and decisive aspect of education is actually the way education provides gratification based on the independent choices of students. Students choose and enjoy subjects that they can personally relate to. *Thirdly*, participants see their self-development, self-expression and gratification as more or less dependent on their relationships with teachers. Some of the participants have very good relationships with teachers that they value highly, while some only desire such relationships because they do not have them. *Fourthly*, their future prospects are very much influenced by their education. *Fifthly*, the experiences of and views on Arab and Western education are described.

The **third** main category that was identified is the relationship between identity and achievement, which is strongly connected to the previous category. *Firstly*, the participants see achievement in terms of self-development and *secondly*, they deviate from traditional approaches to achievement and also from evaluation processes. *Thirdly*, the participants connect academic achievement to a more general notion of achievement that is manifest in experiences of volunteering and extra-curricular work. Some of the participants are over-achievers, either in the traditional sense or on their own terms, and they see their identities as dependent on the student identities, identities in education that they have developed and do not intend to give up in the future.

The **fourth** main category concerns the confrontation between the bilingual or multilingual ideals of the participants and the actual language situation that they experience in Qatar. For the participants, this confrontation has wider socio-cultural implications, and so the minor sections in the fourth subchapter reflect this in their thematic foci. *First*, it is described how the participants experience the connection between identity and language. *Second*, one of the most important shared experiences is one that can be described as seeing a tension between the motivation of Qatar to preserve its Arab heritage and to open up internationally

and to foreigners. *Third*, in this current climate, the participants have shared experiences regarding their bi- or multilingual ideals and the promotion of Arabic. *Fourthly*, it is described how the language situation in education is related to this issue. All in all, the interviews provide ample data with regards to the research interests of the thesis, and the coding procedure was not only in line with the methodology, but also served as a foundation for outlining the main sections of the current chapter (see Table 2).

Table 2. Thematic Codes and Chapters

1. Community and Communal Belongings	2. Identity in Education	3. Identity and Achievement	4. Bilingual and Multilingual Ideals in Qatar
1.1 Family and Religion	2.1 Self-development, self-expression	3.1 Self-development	4.1 Identity and Language
1.2 Being Qatari, Being Arab	2.2 Gratification	3.3 Non-traditional Achievement and Evaluation	4.2 Preservation and Opening-up
1.3 Cosmopolitanism and Global Belonging	2.3 Relationships with Teachers	3.4 A General Notion of Achievement	4.3 Language Ideals and Promotion of Arabic
	2.4 Future Prospects		4.4 Language in education
	2.5 Arab education and Western education		

A priori codes are the ones that constitute the overall thematic sections (Community and Communal Belongings, Identity in Education, Identity and Achievement, Bilingual and Multilingual Ideals in Qatar), and which were guiding the creation of the interview design.

The inductive coding done after the interviews resulted in codes that assisted in categorizing the significant utterances of the participants along the lines of the thematic categories given by a priori coding. The subcategories were identified by coding the data from the interviews.

1. Community and Communal Belongings

1.1 Religion and family. In the experiences of the participants, the most crucial parts of identity are religion and family. Religion and family form the basis of “cultural commonalities” that Calhoun (2003) emphasizes regarding identity. Correspondingly, almost all of the participants have expressed views that present Islam not as an abstract tradition or school of thought but as something that is very much alive and active in how they lead their lives. IAS considers Islam to be a “way of life”, something that makes one “a better person” (Il. 54-56, IAS), which is similar to the theological understanding of the religion (Hussain, 2004). Both for him and for TUS, Islam is closely connected to and inseparable from culture, and to the basic and most important layers of culture. Both of them see Islam as the purest form of guidance individually and collectively as well. As TUS expresses it, Islam is like a “constitution” (e.g., Il. 93-99, TUS 2012). Others have similarly serious experiences and views with regards to their religion.

For instance, NUS answer the question about who she is by first saying that she is a “Muslim”, and also that on a very personal level, religion is something to “go back to” in the time of need (Il. 1122-1123, NUS). In addition, GUS emphasizes the importance of religion, and also says that it has a “very personal” aspect for her (Il. 85-87, GUS). In a way, GUS has an individualistic understanding of religion, in which the individual efforts in analyzing and interpreting Islam (“having to make your own...umm...mind around about or like your own interpretation or just going through reading it and really really having to analyze it” Il. 346-349, GUS). Lastly, MCS states that religion “leads” in the “right way”, also underlining the experience of religion as a guiding principle in life and connects religion to family by using

the same expression: “foundation of life” (ll. 37-41, MCS). She answers to both the question about religion and about family but significantly apart in the time of the interview with this expression.

In the Middle East, Islam has a particularly emphatic role for identity, as Akkari (2004) notes. What is clear from the interviews is that there is indeed a shared experience of the participants, pointing to a crucial component in the lifeworlds, which is their religion, Islam. Also, despite the individual differences, they explicitly connect Islam with life, with the way one leads one’s life, and also with family. It is not a leap to interpret their expressions about their religion as a key component in their life and their identities. Not only does it seem to be a key component, but it is also strongly interconnected with other essential aspects like family and culture.

With regards to family, all of the participants describe it by assigning it the highest importance in thinking about themselves, conforming to Floyd’s (2010) claim that “[f]amily loyalties are said to define natural or primary groups of belonging” (p, 72). Moreover, in the social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1966), the environments in which self-formations take place are mediated by significant others who serve as initiators of the socialization process. In this respect, the familial ties of the participants should be seen as social identity-forming forces. IAS and TUS provide the clearest expressions of why family is important. For IAS, the identity-determining aspect of family life lies partly in its social role, in how extended families and tribes are different communities of belonging. However, he is quick to dismiss any preconceptions about whether the differences (in tribes) give rise to problems: “it’s a tool of unity, it’s not a tool that will create a problem with the state or with religion or anything, no. It’s the tool of unity” (ll. 72-78, IAS). In this case, he argues for the view that many different tribes and sub tribes, extended families and families are actually unified not in spite of their differences but because of the differences that they possess within

the same system of principles like religion or the state (this duality is discussed by Suleiman, 2006, for example). In terms of identities, what he says can be interpreted as a view that promotes an understanding of individual differences within a shared and common framework, not as something that creates tensions or discrepancies but as a unifying force if the framework is shared. GUS illustrates this thought with reference to Islam. Talking about the importance of religion, she says: “it’s always been important in a sense that you have to look at your own interpretations of religion and you have to be able to decide on yourself” (ll. 79-80, GUS). In her family, it is encouraged to personally reflect and individually think about religion, so the individual and personal understandings of Islam do not create tensions within the family but prove to be unifying within the boundaries of family and religion. It can be seen that the identity-relevant aspects of the discussion point to conceive identity as negotiated belonging. Both participants express a need for a unique and individual position but one that is contextualized in terms of belonging to a shared community.

Secondly, TUS repeatedly identifies himself with the expression “family man”. However, when he first describes the importance of family, he takes an objectifying, scientifically and biologically influenced stance:

I mean that like we can survive on our own bas you go crazy so...you need to have a group that you belong to and...from an early age that’s the group that...they love you because of...biological reason and...it’s it’s the best place where you...you learn and you get your early education (ll. 178-182, TUS).

In his case, it can be seen that even though he tries to explain the importance of family from an impersonal and scientific perspective, he still points to one of the most fundamental personal experiences of family: belonging. As a consequence, it is safe to say that for the participants, religion and family serve as the most important and interconnected cornerstones of identity. Most of the participants explicitly refer to their families as religious families, and

so it seems that Islam is first acquired through family but, in a sense, it transcends family as a pure way of life, becoming a foundation for life. It is also a characteristic experience of the participants about family that it is the first and most essential model of community and belonging, and so their lifeworlds depend heavily on how they negotiate their individuality and identities within the given Islamic and familial framework.

1.2 Qatar and Arab identity. Other than religion and family, all of the participants consider themselves Qataris and Arabs, indicating that they do have significant national and cultural components as part of their identities. However, the ways in which they consider themselves Qataris and Arabs are divergent. IAS, for example, associates being a Qatari with culture and the cultural narrative that is a source of pride and should be sustained. Furthermore, he states: “Being Qatari is being an Arab, being Arab is being Qatari” (l. 943, IAS). While his individual stance might be different, his experience is shared with the other participants insofar as they do not conceptualize in exact terms the nature of the relationship between being a Qatari and being an Arab.⁹ However, they conceptualize them as categories of belonging.

Throughout his interview, IAS uses the “we” pronoun, instead of the “I”, to refer to himself, which signals that communal belongings form the “pillars” of his identity. One of these pillars is being a Qatari. As he says: “So we have to maintain culture because it’s the the most important thing that will you know...umm...it’s the most important pillar in our identity” (ll. 45-47, IAS). In his experience then, the association between Qatar and culture is

⁹ Reasons might be found in Suleiman’s (2003) discussion of national identity, in which he argues that the construct of national identity in the Arab world can transcend state boundaries and comprise of various ethnicities in the same state. This is a perplexing situation for a clear distinction between different belongings.

essential to who he is so much so that he expresses it as shared, communal identity.¹⁰

Consequently, the consistency of his views is easier to understand. Despite the individual families and tribes, he envisions a deep unity of people in Qatar and Islam. Moreover, since Qatar and its culture are strongly connected in the cultural narrative that should be sustained, and religion is also inseparable from culture, he describes a coherent picture in which all of his “pillars” of identity are integrated.

NUS and GUS differ; for example, in the way they consider themselves Qataris and Arabs. In answering a question about the relationship between being a Qatari and being an Arab, NUS states that both are important but being a Qatari is more so (l. 986, NUS). On the contrary, GUS says that “I’m associate more my with Arab [...] certainly an Arab identity” (l. 18, GUS). In spite of this contradiction, there is actually an experience about being a Qatari and being an Arab that connects them, namely seeing Qatar as part of the Arab world in a “Venn-diagram overlap”. The participants share a vague and unconceptualized picture about Qatari and Arab belongings that they still see as strongly forming who they are. In answering a question about the difference between the two, NUS replies by saying that she actually does not know (l. 990, NUS). MCS also ascribes more importance to being a Qatari, and she associates it with culture on the one hand, and with rights, privileges and opportunities on the other (ll. 12-15, MCS). The wealth and welfare of Qatar are means for her to develop herself and also to acquire positive feedback from her family and from the wider society. For MCS, the primary goal is to make her family proud and to achieve high status in society, both of which are intimately related to her identity and future self-development. Through the resources and opportunities available, she sees her belonging to Qatar as fostering her self-

¹⁰ As Baker (2009) states in a paper on ELF, “[c]ulture can be viewed as a discourse or discourse community which is dynamic, complex, and negotiated and one of many possible means of interpreting meaning and understanding in interactions that may or may not emerge as relevant” (p. 573).

development. When asked about the relationship between being a Qatari and being an Arab, she admits “I haven’t thought that way”, but she does say that being a Qatari is important because of the “identity”, which she follows up with referring to belonging: “Umm...somewhere I belong to, yeah, somewhere I belong to, yeah like country...a culture...umm...a people and also” (ll. 986-987, MCS). With this, MCS makes an explicit connection between identity and belonging in terms of nationality. In her case, she negotiates her belonging by self-development in order to gain positive feedback.

For TUS, being an Arab is more important than being Qatari: “I’m more of an Arab than than I’m a Qatari” (ll. 2399-2400, TUS 2012). His rationale for saying so is that being a Qatari has derivative importance: “you’re a Qatari because you’re an Arab” (l. 2400, TUS). However, it again has to be emphasized that despite their differences in the matter, the participants do share experiences with regards to the issue, namely the experience of belonging and the unconceptualized nature of the relationship between the two belongings. TUS expresses it as follows: “we have a real feeling of Arabness of of belonging to to a whole group” (ll. 2395-2396, TUS). TUS’s assertion can be seen in the light of Suleiman’s (2003) theory about Arab national identity as transcending the borders of different nations.

TUS’s position is somewhat conflicted in the sense that he also expresses criticism about Qatar as his own country, and he is critical of a type of belonging as determining identities. Firstly, his experience can be summed up by his saying that Qatar is “run” by someone else, not by “us” (by which he, as it can be inferred, means the minority of Qataris as opposed to Western interests), which leads to a feeling that the country does not belong to “them” (ll. 2226-2230, TUS). In a study last year, where TUS was interviewed, he explained the point in terms of the “culture of dependence” (personal communication, March 9, 2011). By this, he meant to indicate that Qataris ignore the social rules in many cases because they lack ownership of their own country and social space, which leads to a lack of responsibility.

According to him, this is due to the fact that Qataris are not in control of their own country. These experiences can be interpreted as pointing to an important fact of the lifeworld, namely that ownership of the country that TUS belongs to is lacking. With regards to identity, this also entails a diminished sense of belonging, since the opportunities for negotiation are lessened by the lack of ownership. On the other hand, this should not be taken as to mean that nationality is irrelevant. As it was mentioned, it is a conflicted position because TUS says “deep down inside yaeeni [“I mean”] your country will always live in your heart [...] bas there’s something that’s missing” (ll. 2288-2290, TUS). This becomes clearer with his point in criticizing belongings.

Secondly, answering a question about what he values the least, TUS answers that “belonging to a certain group to influence your...to set your principles” and the “false feeling of hostility because you’re belonging to a group” (ll. 2442-2443, TUS). Based on these views, one should differentiate between a true and a false type of belonging. True belonging, for TUS, is like being an Arab, belonging to the Arab world, which results in an enrichment of his identity. However, false belonging is defined to be superficial and to be like the ingroup-outgroup dynamics of various political parties that inspire hatefulness towards the outgroup, for instance (cf. Tajfel, 1982 on social identity). In Qatar, the false belonging manifests at various national celebrations, as TUS mentions critically, which people only attend to do “break the law” and “flirt with girls” (ll. 2301-2313, TUS). This is why he values being an Arab more than being a Qatari, because the true sense of belonging to Qatar is hindered by various social phenomena.

IAS and GUS share some critical sentiments as well. IAS is moderately critical about certain changes in traditions and habits that he mostly associates with Western and foreign influence. Similarly to TUS, he sees the root of some problems in Qataris being a minority, which results in foreigners influencing traditions and changing habits. In this respect, Kanan

and Baker (2006) are right that “[t]he general population has become more exposed to global influences, both economically and culturally” (p. 263). IAS recounts an event:

Recently one of the habits was...umm...umm...the party that was in Ritz-Carlton where drinking were distributed freely and...and sort of...and exactly they mentioned that...it was an...the adv...they used their advertisement as you know “if you’re a female, welcome, you can come and you will come freely not like male and your drink will be free”. So this was a very sort of humiliating the the Qatari culture (ll. 198-203, IAS).

For him, this event and the experience is paradigmatic of the country losing too much of its culture, original Islamic and Arab traditions. Also, when GUS talks about Qatari culture, she is critical in the sense that she admits that she has no clear view what that means exactly. On the superficial level, according to her, Qatar manifests its culture in stereotypical ways; for instance, offering camel rides for people who go to the “The Fort”¹¹ that is being turned into a World Heritage site (l. 468, GUS). The paper returns to GUS’s critical attitude towards received ideas about history and culture later.

All in all, the participants of the study expressed different experiences about national identities and belongings. The shared experience seems to be one of belonging, either to Qatar first and to the Arab world second or the other way around. However, the exact nature of the relationship remains unclear for them. One of the shared experiences between IAS, TUS and GUS is a contrast between superficial nationalist Qatari practices (influenced by the strange demographic situation of Qataris being a minority in the cases of IAS and TUS) and having a deep sense of belonging to a nation that seems more ideal than actual. This experience provokes criticism from some of the participants.

¹¹ By this, she refers to the Al-Zubarah fort that was built in 1939, and now serves as a tourist destination, showing the early development of Qatar. <http://www.qatartourism.gov.qa/pillars/index/1/culture/239>

1.3 Global belonging and cosmopolitanism. The clearest expression of global belonging is articulated by IAS in him saying that “International Affairs made me a global citizen, a Qatari global citizen, to be much more accurate” (ll. 729-730, IAS). The thesis deals with the impact of studies (and his studies at the International Affairs program) later, but now what is most important is the key expression “global citizen”. In his experience, he belongs not only to Qatar and the Arab world but also to the global community of humanity, in perceiving humanity as a society with citizens. Therefore, IAS’s identity depends on an expanding circle of communities that are subsets of each other: Qatar – Arab world – humanity. In specifying himself as being a “Qatari global citizen”, he sheds light on the importance of localities as modifying his status as a “global citizen”. The unity of people in Qatar, in the Arab world and in the wider, global context is not undermined by belonging to smaller and more local communities, as he illustrated earlier referring to tribal and familial ties, but as he says “[being a Qatari and being an Arab] never contradicts, it’s like saying ‘I am a Qatari and I’m a human’. I’m an Arab and I’m a Qatari, we should not...umm...make them different. They are the same, ok?” (ll. 937-938, IAS). Consequently, in his experience, differences and localities not only peacefully coexist in a global context but are also cornerstones of unity, instead of creating tensions. This way, he can reconcile the local and global belongings in his identity. Representing globalization this way, IAS’s position can be used to support Dewey’s (2007) theory that “globalization represents something other than straightforward Americanization or Westernization” (p. 335). For IAS, these global belongings do not threaten his local ones. However, as described previously, some global influences can be threatening if the localities are not respected. So according to IAS view, there are aspects of globalization and especially academic globalization (see 2.6 and 4.2 below) that can be peacefully reconciled with the local Arab traditions, but for such reconciliation, the traditions have to be respected. Although he does not explicitly state it this

way, globalization cannot be equated with Westernization, since he seems to think that Westernization entails the erosion of localities while globalization can proceed by leaving certain core local values, traditions and so forth intact.

With the other participants, the significance of global belongings can be seen through interpreting experiences of studying abroad or in international communities. For most of them, Western education is the most important gateway into global “citizenship”, to use IAS’s expression. TUS, for example, has studied in Ireland, and his key expression is, in this regard, “the other” (l. 305, TUS).¹² For him, encountering a different culture was an “eye-opener” experience, and he has gained a new understanding and a new perspective about Qatar (which, for him, is mostly an opportunity to criticize). Similarly to IAS, he ascribes importance to differences, but he experiences the “distance” from Qatar in his studying abroad as support for his view that false belongings should not prompt people to be hateful and critical towards each other. Again, TUS’s position can be expressed as conflicted because on the one hand, he is critical of what he believes to be superficial aspects of Qatari culture, but he is also critical of Westernization and Westernized Qatari education. This inner “conflictedness” seems to be carried on from the study last year. In terms of national pride, TUS then said first that he is proud, but when asked for the reason why, he revised his statement: “Ok, I’m not proud”, but then backed off from this revision as well (personal communication, March 9, 2011). In his recent interview, one time he says, when talking about the need for being progressive in Qatari education, “I don’t feel a sense of belonging to that to that...to my university. Umm...compared to, for example, Ireland” (ll. 1034-1039, TUS). Later, he mentions that the lack of progress in Qatari education and education at foreign

¹² Arguing about learning science in a globalized world, Hwang and Roth (2008) conceptualize the process in terms of encountering the foreign or strange. Their conclusions can be informative about TUS’s experience: “My conscience always is a conscience grounded in and shared with the Other. I arrive at my Self only by way of the mediation of and through the Other” (Hwang & Roth, 2008, p. 949).

universities in Qatar is due to the academics from the United States who “take everything personally” and “didn’t have any real experience with with...yaeeni [I mean] working with other people” (ll. 1115-1116, TUS). As a consequence, the conflict is visible: the lack of progress in Qatari education is due to Western academics, while the ideal picture of Western education is progressive as he experienced in Ireland: “we brought...American universities here [to Qatar] because of that stuff because they’re professional because of professionalism, organization and...and that’s a fact. They’re much better organized than than us” (ll. 1074-1076, TUS). Nevertheless, through describing studying in the West as a formative experience and as one that gives him distance and a non-local perspective, TUS portrays himself as “Qatari global citizen”, to use IAS’s expression, even if TUS’s position is conflicted.

GUS is not explicit about belonging to a global community, but from her interview, it seems clear that she considers herself to be so because of her education choices and aspirations. In not being explicit about it, she is similar to NUS, who spent a semester abroad at Harvard University. The most interesting fact, described below, is that her global belonging was manifest in the way she felt to be on equal footing with the rest of the students with respect to the challenge that Harvard presented. But for GUS, the most important aspects in the way she encountered this global sense of belonging is through the international community at Georgetown University, Qatar. However, this international community is not sufficient, as she explains it cannot be considered as a substitute for studying abroad with which one has the independent university experience. “Independence” is a crucial term here: “Sort of staying here you don’t necessarily get that independence or whatever that word may mean...umm...you know that people will do when they usually go abroad or when they go away from home” (ll. 660-664, GUS). She expresses a balanced view in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of studying at an international university in Qatar. The financial situation is enabling, and being close to home has encouraged her to focus on her studies. On

the other hand, she feels like that she did not get the ideal independent and authentic university experience that motivates her to try and study abroad. Therefore, GUS portrays herself very naturally as a member of a global community of students who have high international mobility. Smit (2010) argues that globalization enters education exactly this way: “globalization has entered education via increased mobility on all societal levels, and linguaculturally heterogeneous groups of learners are no longer rare” (p. 16). All in all, the different levels of belongings indicate the layered constructions of the social realities of the participants. If one follows Berger’s and Luckmann’s (1966) account, then these are the most important social environments in which the formation of the self is mediated. The significant others who facilitate this mediation are primarily family members in these cases.

2. Education and Identity

Observations. The observational data that I have collected focuses on the educational environments of the participants. In attempting to understand the experiences of the participants regarding identity and education, it is important to examine their surroundings where they spend most of their time during their educational activities. For this reason, it is appropriate that the observations are outlined under the present section. The assumption is that the educational environments shape the experiences of the participants. Consequently, the campuses of the respective universities were observed. There are two main sites, Qatar University, where both IAS and MCS study, and Education City, the campus that houses the international university programs and branches that were invited by Qatar Foundation. This is where TUS’s, GUS’s and NUS’s departments are located.

The most important difference between the two sites is that the campus of Qatar University seems old and dated compared to the state-of-the-art quality of Education City. While the buildings, facilities and equipment suggest a high-tech atmosphere of modernity at Education City, the same aspects of Qatar University seem to be run-down in comparison. On

the outside, Qatar University's campus seems less well maintained than Education City. As an example, at the national university, the grass does not seem to be regularly cut and the pathways were stained, while at Education City everything suggests cleanliness and regular maintenance. At Qatar University's lecture rooms, there are many chairs and tables that are damaged or stained. The classrooms seem unattractive and unorganized. The university still uses old overhead projectors, and many classrooms lack computers. The seating of the lecture rooms are theater-like, while in the classrooms, there are no individual desks, but only long ones. These features are striking because many of the Qatari students come from independent secondary schools that all have state-of-the-art smart boards, laptops, and so on. Moreover, the professors and the faculty at Qatar University have no individual offices but rather they have cubicles. Some professors who work in the engineering department have shared offices. The offices of those who have their own are small spaces without windows. Lastly, the library of Qatar University has a similarly old feel as the rest of the university. The library looks underused, and it seems that it does not have enough resources for up-to-date books and technology.

At Texas A&M, lecture rooms are high-tech, have comfortable cushion seats, microphones and electric sockets for all of the seats. The classrooms are big and bright with plasma screens, single seating desks set up in rows and the lecturer is situated in front with a big computer at the lecturer station. Here all of the professors have their own offices with their names displayed next to or on the doors and the doors are usually open (which might indicate a policy decision). In contrast to Qatar University, the area of Education City that houses Georgetown University has not only state-of-the-art classrooms with equipment but also a four-level library, a Western coffee shop, a restaurant and even a souvenir store. In addition, the Texas A&M area has a small cafeteria with an outdoor atrium, it has a library, a relaxing place with foosball tables and comfortable seating, water and snack dispensers all

around, a study corner called “The Oasis” where students can rest on couches with plasma TVs and free coffee and tea.

In addition, Qatar University seems to have increased the emphasis on Arabic since last year. While last year, many of the signs were displayed in both Arabic and English, now some of them are exclusively in Arabic. The mission statement, for example, is still displayed in both languages. Overall, there is a strong support for Qatari identity, underlined by both events and artwork. There is also a grandiose mosque in the middle of the campus; however, it has a similarly old feel to the rest of the university. This mosque has call for prayer that can be heard throughout the campus on the loudspeaker.

On the other hand, the communication of identity at Education City is not through Western identity but by emphasizing a sort of institutional identity. The aforementioned souvenir shop of Georgetown University, for example, sells all kinds of products (from clothes to mugs, etc.) that communicate the identity of Georgetown University as a brand. Similarly, Texas A&M strongly suggests its institutional identity by employing the term “Aggie”. Aggies are students or alumni of the university. Signs such as “Once an Aggie, always an Aggie” and “We are Aggies” reinforce this sense of identity. Interestingly, these are the only signs displayed at Texas A&M that are not only in English but also in Arabic. All the other information is displayed exclusively in English. At the Texas A&M area, flags of Texas, maps and emblems of the Texas star communicate even the state identity of Texas.

The Student Center at Education City is a very large facility building. It includes an Apple iStore, a bowling alley, a coed gym, a state-of-the-art mosque, a Western type market, a pharmacy, a bookstore and a coffee shop. The Student Center at Education City has a big mosque with quality towels and carpets, radiating a welcoming feel. It is big enough in size to be able to fit all the students from the universities around, but it seems underused. Like at Qatar University, there is a call to prayer at the mosque, but unlike Qatar University, it cannot

be heard outside the prayer area. The area where Texas A&M is located has a small prayer room that seems somewhat hidden next to a Western chain coffee shop in a corner.

The consequences that can be drawn from these observations are limited but also point to possibly significant aspects of the students' lifeworlds regarding identity and education. The coarse interpretation would be that Qatar University communicates a Qatari, Arab and Muslim identity in a way that it gets associated with impressions of datedness, age, and so forth, while Education City, through various institutional identities, communicates a Westernized identity located in an Arab country. The most important aspect is efficiency. While Qatar University seems associated with an old and dated atmosphere, the campus of the Qatar Foundation universities is new, modern and state-of-the-art. Taking into account globalization, and academic globalization as an aspect of the educational reforms in Qatar, it is probably a safe conclusion that the efficiency of communicating any picture of identity does depend on the institution's ability to create a welcoming and attractive atmosphere. In these terms, Qatar University can be said to be less efficient than the universities in Education City. For example, since the "Agginess" of Texas A&M is associated with smart boards, comfortable rooms, coffee shops, restaurants, and so forth, it might seem to be more appealing to students, so the Aggie identity is efficiently communicated. One of the most striking examples of this effective communicatory practice is that the campus broadcasts American football and basketball games from the home campus in the U.S. They broadcast live, which means that most games are at night in the time zone of Doha. Students turn up to these broadcasts wearing the team colors and other Texas A&M clothes to cheer for the team (it has to be mentioned that this is in no way only enthusiasm for sports themselves, since the Qatari professional football / soccer and basketball games in Doha are played in nearly empty stadiums). This cannot be said about Qatar University. However, this is a coarse and limited conclusion that has to be put against the participants' experiences. In advance, most of the

participants prefer international universities to the national one, which is an indication that the above interpretation has plausibility.

2.1 Education as an arena of self-expression and self-development. Drawing on the theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966), the thesis argues that education is one of the significant social arenas in which the self-formation of the participants takes place. As has been indicated in interspersed remarks in the previous section, education and educational experiences are highly valued and constitutive of the participants' identities. This confirms the conclusions of Norton's (2000) study, in which she argues that language learning should be conceptualized as investment into the learners' social identities. In general, the participants of this study see education similarly related to their identities. This section focuses on this dimension of identities and explicitly outlines how the participants relate their identities to their education and educational experiences. The participants experience the connection between education and identity. They see their higher education as a context in which they can develop and express themselves. Insofar as this self-development and expression are of primary value, the connection of education and identity becomes crucial as well. In the words of Dall'Alba (2009a): "In potentially forming and shaping the stands we take, education can have a key part to play in who we are becoming: in what we come to know, how we act, and who we are" (p. 43). Since the thesis has defined identity as negotiated belonging, this section can be seen as exploring the ways the participants position themselves in relation to professional and institutional belongings during their educational career. The findings of the thesis in this case undermine what Rostron (2009) calls the "view of education prevalent in Qatar" that sees the value of education in terms of "practical, tangible outcomes" or "extrinsic motivational forces". Although the participants recognize extrinsic motivational forces, they see them in connection to intrinsic and identity-relevant motivation.

For instance, GUS's interview is intriguing in the respect that her educational narrative is the story of her discovering her roots and identity. This makes sense because her familial relations are atypical in Qatar: she is very close to her immediate family and still close but not so much with the extended family. She is uncertain why, but one reason she gives is "maybe because of the education" (l. 140, GUS). So education is strongly tied to the very basics of her lifeworld, her family. Following Greasley and Ashworth (2007), it has to be recognized that "learning takes place in the context of that hugely complex web of meanings which is referred to as the 'lifeworld'" (p. 840) in order to avoid impoverishing the educational experiences of the students as they are embedded in the "complex web of meanings".

GUS studies Western intellectuals at a Western university. As she puts it, after talking about studying the formation of national identity, society and individuals, reading Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, "it made me connect more with my own identity [...] that's part of the reason why I became so interested in actually going back into the Arabic" (ll. 467-473, GUS). GUS perceives herself as lacking the proficiency of writing and reading in Arabic, while her colloquial and conversational skills are fine. By "Arabic", she refers not only to trying to establish her connection with her native language, but also to establish and examine her Arab cultural and historical roots. Moreover, for her, education is not only identity-constitutive subject-wise, but also as an institution. She is interested in studying and research, and she aims to pursue a doctoral degree. In this, she is definitely influenced by her family, especially her mother, who works as an academic advisor at Qatar University, so she has been shaped by education from early on. As far as the subject-matter goes, she repeats the paradoxical situation of discovering her Arab cultural roots via Western education, when she says that she found her interest in Middle-Eastern history at Georgetown University, her second year. Even in talking about Qatar, she states, "I never felt it to be an Arab country until I came in to university" (l. 919, GUS), which again is paradoxical insofar as only looking

from the perspective of Western education, she found her country to be an Arab one.

Nevertheless, despite the complex and somewhat paradoxical situation, education for GUS is strongly connected to her identity in self-expression and self-development.

Both NUS and MCS describe educational experiences as becoming constitutive of their identities. For NUS, education made her desires and goals clear and also shaped them. Self-development for her is mostly achieved by participating in student groups and extracurricular activities. These helped “develop” her “as a person” (ll. 93-97, NUS), as she puts it. Her choice of studying mass communication is an enactment of her identity since she describes the reasons for it as looking for something “creative”. For MCS, the challenging nature of education, its positive and negative sides are all identity forming: “It’s also a part of who I am now” (l. 419, MCS). She is a Mass Communications student at Qatar University, and she sees her choice of university as dependent on her “potential”.

TUS’s narrative of his education has a main focal point. He took up medical education because his good grades motivated his parents and teachers to forcefully suggest that he should choose a career path as a doctor or an engineer, as these are the most prestigious ones. As a medical student, he studied abroad in Ireland, and he had to complete social science courses. As he describes, these courses had a “big effect” on him. He pictures his medical education as unsatisfactory, after which he begins to realize his true interests in social science courses that relate to life and the wider world. He concludes by answering to the question: “that’s how college, I think, changed me” (l. 471, TUS). Leaving Ireland also meant for him leaving the medical career path. Back in Qatar, he took up engineering, despite the fact that he had enjoyed social science courses immensely, but only recently has he realized that this again was not for him. The story of TUS construes his educational path as a path that is strongly connected to identity, and through detours, to him finding out that he is only able to enact and express his identity in social sciences education. As his narrative signals, it is

superbly important for him to find the educational path in which he can develop and express his identity.

Finally, the most characteristic expression of IAS is that he is a “Qatari global citizen”, as has been mentioned. Returning to his point about his studies, particularly International Affairs contributing to his identity, he sees the “global” part in “Qatari global citizen” as developed by studying at his university. The importance of education for his identity is visible the way he starts to describe himself at the beginning of the interview: “I’m a senior student of International Affairs at Qatar University” (ll. 17-18, IAS). One of the descriptors of himself that he chooses to begin with concerns education.

Similarly to TUS, his narrative of his education has a detour through engineering. As engineering is one of the most prestigious career paths, he gave in to the advice of his parents and teachers, which were based on his great grades and percentage. However, he found out that he was unable to satisfy his interests and enact his identity as an engineering student, so he switched to International Affairs. Neither IAS nor TUS were able to find their “professional ways of being” (Dall’Alba, 2009a) in the institutional practices of engineering. For IAS, it is also essential that he studies at Qatar University. He spent time in the Academic Bridge Program at Qatar Foundation before choosing Qatar University, and he says, “So the Academic Bridge Program when I was there, I didn’t feel that I was in Qatar, ok?” And later: “but in Qatar University, I felt more Qatari, ok?” (l. 624, IAS). This is in direct contradiction with the experience of GUS that only after going to Georgetown University, Qatar, did she feel Qatar to be an Arab country. In this way, IAS is the only student who not only connects education in general or the subject matter to his identity, but experiences the institution to be an integral part of how education forms his identity. If Bonnett (2009) is right about the strong intertwining between “integrity of self”, “tradition” and “place of learning”, it can then be used to explain IAS’s experience and his lack of comfort in studying at an international

university. It seems that IAS consciously recognizes that studying at Qatar University is more adequate to his own “emplaced” self-experience than it is at international universities.

2.2 Gratification and independence. Previously, the thesis has outlined in general the various ways students see education as being connected to their identities, especially through self-expression and self-development in education. This connection is mostly manifest in the lifeworlds of the participants in their independent choices and their gratification. Basically, the participants independently choose their educational paths, and they choose or arrive to what they enjoy. Their independent choices are motivated by gratification, so this is the way through which they see their identities enacted in education. Gratification here can be seen as indicating whether the participant has the ability to negotiate his or her position at the institution in a satisfying way.

An interesting fact about a couple of the participants is that their choice of pursuing their educational path is motivated partly by their dislike of mathematics. NUS, for example, admits that she has a “stupid reason” for her choice of subject: “I hate math” (l. 564, NUS) is the reason she gives. MCS also declares “I don’t like math” (l. 928, MCS) as a motivation for preferring a major like Mass Communications over anything related to natural science. What this demonstrates about these two participants is that their educational paths are intimately related to their personal likes and dislikes. Therefore, in interpreting their choices and reasons for them, the thesis finds that education is related to identity in the shared experience of making educational choices based on how they intend to negotiate their belongings.

Both NUS and MCS have positive reasons for preferring to study what they have chosen to. NUS relates education to identity further in stating that her diversity of interests (“I like to pursue lot of different fields” [l. 922, NUS]) can be all pursued at Northwestern University, Qatar. She sees her choices of subjects to be based on creativity, which can be interpreted as self-expression. She enjoys pursuing a variety of interests such as pedagogy and

media. To connect her points, she enjoys mediating her identity creatively through various educational activities. She does not explicitly mention independence and independent disposition as something she values, but it is clear from her interview that independence plays a significant role in her educational experience. She independently pursues her interests and chooses her studies accordingly.

For MCS, gratification has been connected to education from early on. As a child, she reports, she enjoyed the weekends that she spent at the English Center because of the non-traditional approach to education and the emphasis on group work and collaboration. The thesis will return to the role of languages and educational methods later, but what is now important is that for MCS, educational choices are positively related to her identity through gratification. Her independent attitude began with her application to the university, by mentioning with pride that she experienced herself as an exception among the others because she went through the application process all by herself. She also sees her identity as connected with her independent way of being a student: “I learn how to educate myself” (l. 338, MCS). So paradoxically, she acquired an autodidactic perspective at her university. It is also somewhat paradoxical in MCS’s case that her journey of independence began accidentally: she was set to go into the Academic Bridge Program that would have prepared her for an international, Qatar Foundation university, but her father was late to submit her paperwork, and for this reason she ended up at Qatar University. In her experience, it was “fate”, although she did not want to go to Qatar University, and if given the chance to start over, she would choose to attend Northwestern University, Qatar.

Unlike MCS, GUS did not enjoy extracurricular educational activities as a child. However, her story is one in which she comes around to appreciate the value of it as she gains her independence. Talking about music classes, she says, “when I was old enough to sort of decide for my own or when my parents let me decide I was about thirteen or twelve I had

stopped [...] And now I've gotten back into by myself" (ll. 783-786, GUS). She also asserts her independence in her educational choices at the university. For instance, unlike NUS and MCS, GUS actually enjoys mathematics. For her economics is the subject to avoid: "Economics is something I would never do again [laughs]" (l. 970, GUS). She chooses her studies and her courses based on her interests and what she enjoys. Diversity of interests plays an emphatic role for her, as well as for NUS. In answering a question about how her studies relate to her as a person, she states that they relate to her because of her ability to choose: she was able to choose her classes, subjects, professors and class types. All in all, she clearly expresses that identity is connected to education because of the ability to choose independently based on one's interests and gratification. Her preference for the diversity of the program at Georgetown and her emphasis on "choosing" both point to the phenomenon of negotiation and to the way GUS carries it out.

As previously mentioned, IAS's story of education involves a major change when he decided that engineering is not for him, and so he transferred to Qatar University from Education City to study International Affairs: "my grades were good, but I I didn't enjoy being an engineer" (l. 376, IAS). So, what motivated one of the greatest changes of his educational career was mostly gratification. Elaborating more, he states, "I went to U.K., I came back to Qatar as a student of engineer. I didn't find myself, then I decided to study...what I really like, ok?" (ll. 687-689, IAS). In saying this, IAS explicitly connects education not only with gratification and interests ("what I like"), but also with identity ("I didn't find myself"). His statement implies that in his experience, one is able to find oneself in one's studies. Therefore, for him, education is intimately related to identity. In his story, this relation is expressed by the way of a narrative that is reminiscent of self-discovery narratives, of journeys to one's true self. Similarly, TUS's story of detours in medicine and engineering until finding his true interests in social sciences indicates that the educational paths of these

participants are strongly intertwined with their identities.¹³ The most reliable indicator of finding one's true interests is gratification deriving from perceiving studies as relevant for one's identity and personality. In this way, the process of negotiation in education, through institutions and programs, can be seen as identity-constitutive in relation to different belongings. IAS and TUS, for instance, have negotiated their institutional belongings in connection to their identities.

2.3 Relationship with teachers. For the participants, their gratification depends on their subject of study. However, not only on what they study but the way the subject matter is presented to them. In this respect, having good relationships with their teachers is crucial. Following Berger and Luckmann (1966), it can be said that for the participants, their teachers and professors assume the role of significant others, through whom the mediation between the self and the environment takes place. In this case, it means that the formation of identities in education is dependent in part on the relationships with teachers and professors. This again evokes the call for attention to the lifeworlds of the students that Greasley and Ashworth (2007) promote because the relationships with teachers and professors form cornerstones of the participants' lifeworlds that heavily influence their educational experiences. Talking about how his goals have become clear, IAS immediately mentions his teachers, even his high-school teachers: "I was honored and pleased that I had amazing amazing teachers" (l. 363, IAS). IAS describes his teachers in personal term even to the point of treating them as friends ("some of them are really close friends to me" [l. 515, IAS]). In explaining this, he refers to the Qatari culture, which, in his experience, establishes the position of teachers not only as

¹³ As TUS says, "I feel like I enjoy other courses more. I enjoy social sciences more... [...] than enjoying...that's part of it also. So I don't relate to the professors when they're talking about when they're enthusiastic about engineering, I'm not I'm not that enthusiastic" (Il. 1051-1057, TUS 2012).

instructors but also as “second fathers” (Il. 523-525, IAS).¹⁴ So in the lifeworld in IAS, teachers have importance similar to that of the family. And knowing how greatly family matters for the participants and their identities, it is a significant expression.

For IAS, the analogy goes further. As he states, “[the teachers] became example for me, that’s why I wanna continue, I wanna be like them. I wanna be like my professors in Qatar University” (Il. 530-531, IAS). His goals and aspirations are strongly influenced by his education, particularly by his teachers, who, on a tertiary level, not only advise and instruct but also have become role models for IAS. Through the perception of teachers in this light, education not only has influence on IAS’s identity at this point in time, but it also has impact on who and what he aspires to become. To quote Dall’Alba (2009a) again: “education can have a key part to play in who we are becoming” (p. 43).

At Georgetown University, Qatar, GUS chose her major based on the professors who taught the courses. She did not attend the information sessions, and when it came down to choosing between cultural politics and national politics, she chose the former based on her experiences about the professors with whom she met. In sum, “I chose cultural politics and more so for the reason that I enjoyed the professors taught there” (Il.213-214, GUS). Later, she found her true interest in Middle-Eastern history, and it was partly due to an approach by one of her professors. As she explains, this particular professor took an “alternative approach”, which made the subject matter significantly more interesting. Instead of the traditional history course method that lists kings, periods, and so forth, what grabbed her attention was examining the interconnections between society and people. “[S]he always

¹⁴ IAS uses the word “politer”, which is *Murabi* (singular) or *Marabiyoun* (plural), meaning “someone who raises”. The same root word is used in the name of the department of education, which, translated literally, is the department of rearing and education.

encouraged us to look at things in a very different perspective” (ll. 452-453, GUS), as she says. So for GUS, this has been a formative experience.

Similarly to IAS, an academic path has become so attractive for GUS, based on these experiences, that her goal is to continue her education, her research and apply for a doctoral program. About the aforementioned professor who teaches courses on Middle-Eastern history, GUS says, “I have grown very close to the professor that I mentioned before” (l. 246, GUS). The professor became the supervisor for her thesis, and GUS was invited to work in a research project with her. She states that in general and because of the “small environment” at the university, students get to establish personal relationships with their professors. For her, she sees these relationships as lasting ones on which she can rely on in the future. In sum, “they [the professors] have helped me a lot [short laugh]...you know with regards to...umm...even maturing as a person” (ll. 335-339, GUS). So her identity and future goals are influenced strongly by her education and particularly by her relationships with her teachers, to whom she relates not only professionally but personally as well.

NUS also talks about the importance of the relationships with teachers and how the small sizes of classes and the intimate environment lead to personal relationships (“we were very very close with our professors” (l. 423, NUS)). Similarly to the participants above, in her experience, her teachers help and assist not only academically but personally as well. On an academic level, she refers to a time when “an amazing professor” actually gave her a motivating talk about her future prospects. As she describes, this “really pushed” her, and the support was very helpful (ll. 218-228, NUS). Consequently, for all three students above, relationships with their teachers and professors play a prominent role in their lifeworlds. These relationships have an impact not only on academic performance, but also on identity-related gratification in education, on future goals and prospects and motivation.

On the other hand, both for TUS and MCS, the lack of these relationships indicate how much value they ascribe to them. In other words, the importance of good relationships with teachers is indicated by the consequences of their absence. In TUS's case, he begins to criticize some of his professors by saying "I've had some some...personal issues with some professors" (l. 1021, TUS 2012). Referring back to what he said about earlier, enjoying the subject of his studies is inherently connected to the way he can relate to his professors. Moreover, in his experience, some of his teachers do not "represent...U.S. education" (l. 1023, TUS 2012). Instead of progressive ideals, they manifest "close-minded way of old way of thinking" (ll. 1026-1027, TUS 2012). He expresses the disadvantages of this by mentioning two things. First, according to him, some of his teachers "take everything personally" (l. 1102, TUS), which is opposed to the professional ideal of education that he expects. Second, he is critical about academics-for-its-own-sake, meaning that again, some of his professors seem to have lacked any non-academic work experience, "communication skills", skills for teamwork. These are all factors that hindered the forming of good relationships for TUS. The major impact of this phenomenon is that TUS did not feel a sense of belonging to his university. Therefore, it is visible how significant good relationships would have been for his identity, because they might have established his university as identity-relevant. This also illustrates that belonging is a notion that can be used to characterize educational experiences. TUS has experienced a lack of belonging or a lack of the ability to negotiate his belongings that resulted in his feeling that the university is not relevant for his identity. In this, the negative experiences with teachers and professors have played an important role.

The most telling experience of MCS is when she mentions one of her friends who studies international relations. According to MCS, there is a professor at the International Relations department who is strongly inspiring and encouraging. As she says, "[h]e's not my teacher, but I wish that he's my teacher" (l. 1336, MCS). When asked whether she has had

similar experiences with her own professors, she answers: “No. [...] Never. Never” (ll. 1360-1366, MCS). To be clear, it is not the case that MCS has had bad relationships with her professors or her university. Neither is she as critical as TUS. On the contrary, she can even imagine future collaborations with her professors. What she lacks is the identity-forming and motivating relationships that IAS, GUS and NUS all have. Again, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) self-formation has to be understood as a social process in which the human and the natural environments are mediated by significant others (p. 68). This section has shed light on how the participants of the study see (or desire to see) their teachers and professors as significant others who help them mediate the process of social self-formation in the context of education.

2.4 Future prospects: success and education. As it has been alluded to briefly, for some of the participants, they are so strongly embedded in their education that their future goals and prospects have become integrated with it. Following Norton’s (2000) theory, it can be seen that the studies of the participants can indeed be conceived of in terms of investment. Some of them feel that they have “invested” substantially in their education, and leaving the educational context would seriously diminish their motivation. The clearest expression of this can be found in the interview with IAS. He states, “I hope to achieve sort of a sustainable process of learning that, in other words, I will start I will always learn stuff” (ll. 844-845, IAS). Because of the experience, of the interest and the gratification, of the motivating relationships with professors, IAS’s identity is fundamentally connected to education insofar as it influences his future goals and prospects. In other words, his goal is to perpetuate the process of education and his identity in education at the same time.

Replying to a question about the gains of his education, IAS states, “I will satisfy God, I’ll satisfy my family...I’ll satisfy before my family, I’ll satisfy my state, I’ll satisfy my family, and...at the end, I’ll satisfy myself because I made everyone satisfied” (ll. 852-854,

IAS). Through education, he sees himself as becoming someone who can satisfy the principles and requirements that come from the cornerstones of his identity: religion, family and country. Also, it can be seen how strongly these are related to his identity since he makes his self-satisfaction dependent on them. Belonging to a family, a religion, a country has effects on how IAS experiences the outcomes of his education.

Consistently with what he has said about education, IAS declares, “I don’t think consider myself successful because once I consider myself successful, I will stop. So I’m I will never consider myself successful. I will do successful things, but I will not be successful person, ok?” (ll. 761-763, IAS). The difference between “being successful” and “doing successful things” signals a deep resistance towards a finished identity. As it is described later, many of the participants are hesitant to portray themselves as successful. Part of the hesitation might be that they do not want to appear as over-confident. Islamic religious values also contribute here, because of the required modesty and humility.¹⁵ There is also an educational reason, namely that “being successful” would put a stop to the process of identity-formation that they are still a part of in their education. The final attribution of success, as IAS argues, is up to posterity and “the coming generation” (l. 775, IAS). In this way, IAS is able to keep his identity in formation, so that it is the task of the future to judge him as a successful person while he can keep doing successful things and does not have to put an end to his forming identity. Again, the coherence of his views is striking: through perpetuating the process of his identity-formation in education, he is able to achieve successful things, to satisfy religious, familial and societal principles, without the need to acquire a fixed and finished identity that would put an end to his education.

¹⁵ For instance, one of the sayings of the Prophet is: “The character of Islam is modesty”

<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/muwatta/047-mmt.php> Book 47, Number 47, 2.9.

Less explicitly, the goal of perpetuating the process of education is present both with GUS and NUS. GUS describes how education itself has become one of her main interests, which is one of the reasons she aims to pursue “a sort of a doctoral field just to be able to study” (l. 687, GUS). The phrase “just to be able to study,” indicates a similar experience to what IAS explained. Education has become such an important component of GUS’s identity, shown in her interests and goals, that she means to extend it into the future, as much as she can.

Similarly to IAS, she is hesitant to describe herself as successful. She gives a different explicit reason, however, it can be interpreted along the same lines. In GUS’s experience, she has yet to encounter challenges to overcome before she can safely say that she is successful. As she explains, “I’ve always had the opportunities to do something as... So I just took those opportunities...umm...that were easily available to me” (ll. 2935-2936, GUS). The lack of challenge and struggle actually motivates GUS to educate herself further and to anticipate challenges along the line. Therefore her view can be understood as involving the same aim to avoid a finished identity and to continue her identity formation in the arena of education.

The third student who expresses a desire for perpetuating the process of education is NUS. In her words, “I feel like I’m more interested in getting an education rather than work [...] That’s why I wanna continue...my masters and go into law school and you know...continue my education” (ll. 804-813, NUS). It is not hard to demonstrate that at the core of this is a shared experience that has been explained before. The present paper finds that these participants are so interested and embedded in their education (partly because they enjoy their studies, partly because they have good relationships with their professors) that it influences their future goals and prospects. Essentially, education has an impact on who they want to become. When asked about what she intends to do after her education, NUS indicates that she probably wants to pursue an education-related job, maybe at Qatar Foundation.

Similarly to IAS, her reason is that this is a way in which one can repay the community for the support during education. In the end, these participants experience education as an avenue to the wider society.

In a sense, MCS is an exception. Her goal by studying mass communications is not to sustain her identity in education. Instead, she wants to become a writer or work in the media. The reasons why she differs in this respect are probably numerous, but in the interpretation of the present study, it comes down to two main factors. First, she does not emphasize enjoying studies as much as the others. Second, she does not have the same inspiring and motivating relationships with her professors as the others. So her experiences of education are not as appealing for her as they are for the others. On the other hand, she feels similarly hesitant about ascribing herself success: “I will feel successful when I’ll be fully independent...and...umm...I’ve done something that...umm...everyone will be proud of” (ll. 1549-1553, MCS). So her idea of success consists of two components: independence and feedback from community. Both indicate that she is hesitant to describe herself as successful because she does not consider her identity to be finished. As the others, she experiences herself to be in the process of identity formation. She postpones success until she can claim an independent identity and achieve something that resonates with the wider society.

Even though he intends to pursue a master’s and a doctoral degree, the situation of TUS is even more markedly different. In replying to the question whether he feels successful as a student, he says “yes”, but he immediately elaborates: “Even if other people would [short laugh] tell you otherwise cause...umm [pause] I’m a family man...I just realized I enjoy other stuff more” (ll. 1480-1482, TUS 2012). There are three things in this utterance that has to do with how one should understand TUS’s success. First of all, he sees himself successful independently of what others think of him. Secondly, it plays a part in his success that he is a “family man”. Thirdly, he came to the realization that he has been on the wrong educational

path so far (in connection to gratification). Therefore, for TUS, success is independent and individual. However, it is not independent from his family and also not from his interests and gratification. What he indicates here is that family plays a more important role in his identity than education, but even so, the education that induces gratification (in contrast to what he was studying before) still has a significant part to play.

For TUS, the process of education has been more or less concluded in a formal way. In this respect, he is different from the other participants. However, they still share the experience about the self-development that takes place in education. The most important gain for TUS is not only academic development but also identity-development. There is a tension in his thinking about how to express what part of education has ended and what is still going on. So first he says, “I’m developing myself not just academically, but also as yaeeni as a human being as...as a citizen”, but then a little later, “the individual that was built, I believe...is...independent enough and opinionated enough” (ll. 1521-1523, TUS 2012). So he oscillates between talking about the development process in the present and in the past. The more dominant of the two is to conceive it as part of the past. TUS thinks that education has made him “a good person”, for which he is satisfied and also has the motivation to further try to fulfill his potential. Therefore, despite the differences, he still shares with the other participants the view that education prepares one for the future, helps in self-development and relates to the wider society. In TUS’s expression, the most important goal of his education is “to fulfill my potential as...as an active citizen, as an yaeeni...umm...to put my...my...stamp my yaeeni...make...an impression, make you do something, leave a legacy” (ll. 1619-1621, TUS 2012). Recalling what IAS, GUS, NUS and MCS have to say about their future prospects with regards to the impact on their society or feedback from their community, TUS’s difference lies mainly in his feeling that he is stuck with a program that is not gratifying for him. Also, since his interview last year, his priorities are not confined to the

area of education, broadly construed. His description of himself as a “family man” indicates that his education is not the only priority for him right now; he has other responsibilities that the other participants do not mention.¹⁶

2.5 National education and international education. As mentioned in the “Introduction”, the American think-tank RAND is the organization behind the research into the country’s educational reforms. RAND’s outlook is primarily pragmatic. There are certain ends that should be as efficiently reached as possible. If this is so, then one of the main questions is whether such a reform process influenced by Western cultural forces can be reconciled with Qatar’s own socio-cultural situation, which seems to be a significant policymaking perspective. One of the core components of the reforms suggested by RAND is a heavy emphasis on English. As Zellman et al. (2009) describe the reforms, English has become one of the evaluation subjects together with Arabic, mathematics and science. Moreover, they emphasize the use of English in mathematics and science classes. Stasz et al. (2007) also rate English proficiency as highly important, mentioning the job market as demanding in this respect. As they say, “[t]he K–12 education reform currently under way in Qatar emphasizes English language learning and incorporates new curriculum standards and assessments for it” (p. 30).

The participants of the present study have expressed that they are proficient in English, some have said that they are much more comfortable doing academic work in English than Arabic, and some have said that due to their intensive English-education history, they regret that they are not as proficient in Arabic as in English in many contexts or different uses of language. Based on these findings, the conclusion can be risked that the reformation focusing on English might have been “too successful”, to put it this way. It is by itself an

¹⁶ Moreover, IAS’s notion of the leader” and TUS’s notion of “the agent of change” bear important similarities, shedding light on significant similarities between their goals.

educational policy issue that there are students who regret the state of their native language and as a cause, they cite their English education. It is also an identity issue because an interesting question can be raised: what does it indicate about the negotiation of one's identity when one is much better conducting academic work in English than in one's native language?

The thesis investigates the issue through the eyes of the participants. Although the study is qualitative, and interviewing five students provides less than representational data, the experiences of the participants might be of interest to policymakers. Focusing on the shared experiences of the study's participants should not conceal the fact that they conduct their studies at different institutions. IAS and MCS go to the national university, Qatar University, while GUS, NUS and TUS study at different international universities of Qatar Foundation's Education City. The present paper concentrates on the significant similarities in the participants' lifeworlds despite these differences. The present subsection deals with their experiences regarding how they see the relationship between Arab and Western models of education. As Rostron (2009) argues about liberal arts education in Qatar, Qatar Foundation universities manifest academic globalization, and the establishment and continuous expansion of Education City is a site for clashing of different academic cultures. In this regard, the empirical question of the analysis is whether this clash is apparent in the experiences of the participants.

For IAS, as it has been mentioned, the contrast between the models is emphatic. It looks as if the social construction of his educational reality is heavily dependent on the educational environment, its national or international characteristics. As he says, he experiences his national identity stronger at the national university than before in the Academic Bridge Program at Qatar Foundation: "in Qatar University, I felt more Qatari" (l. 624, IAS). On the other hand, the option has to be mentioned that it is not because of Qatar University's effective communication of Qatari identity that IAS feels to be "more Qatari"

there. His saying can be interpreted as a reaction against or resistance towards the effective communication of Westernized identity that the universities in Education City provide.

Nevertheless, IAS's views can be interpreted by stating that he argues for a balanced view about education. In his experience, some international universities of Qatar Foundation disrupt the balance by ignoring their country of residence. "Ok, teach teach American history because American university, but at the same time, teach our history! Teach the Qatari history, right?" (ll. 630-631, IAS). Saying this follows directly from his general, moderately and open-mindedly conservative outlook. As it has been mentioned, he is critical about Western habits and practices insofar as they trump Arab and Qatari traditions. Education is also responsible for the balance between cultural diversity and cultural preservation that he has mentioned earlier. Consequently, the traditions should not only be respected on a general social level but at the level of education as well. Concluding, "I think that universities in Qatar whether with where they're foreign universities or national university, should be Qatari" (ll. 565-566, IAS).

MCS shares these experiences and views about the tensions that preservation efforts in an increasingly globalized world bring. In her words, "the people used to save their culture, they don't let they don't let...umm...other cultures to affect them but now they want to...umm...to benefit from others, so they can be from the development countries" (ll. 160-162, MCS). In spite of this, her considerations do not extend to the issues about Western and Arab education. Although she is a student of Qatar University, she would choose to go to a Qatar Foundation university if she had the opportunity again. She does have a balanced view of her own institution in assessing positive and negative aspects of her university, but it seems that she sees her initial prejudices about Qatar University and her preference for international education as well-founded.

The three students who study at international universities tend to acquire a stance that strongly prefers Western to Arab education. It has already been mentioned that TUS sees professionalism and organizational abilities associated with Western education.

I'm not saying American education is the best but I'm saying there are certain stuff that we...we are yaeeni...umm...we brought...American universities here because of that stuff because they're professional because of professionalism, organization and...and that's a fact. They're much better organized than than us (TUS).

His position is conflicted in the sense that he is critical of certain foreign professors at international universities based on the experience that they represent an old-fashioned, non-progressive educational system. In essence, he criticizes American education for not living up to his standards of what Western education should be. What it comes down to is that he favors American education, as it is "supposed or marketed to be", and its negative aspects are attributed to American professors who "take everything personally", who are "academics" lacking communication and cooperative skills.

GUS's preference for Western education is visible from the aforementioned paradoxical views that she expresses. Basically, one of her formative experiences is finding her true interests and goals at Georgetown University, Qatar. The paradox is that her interest is in Middle-Eastern history; her goal is to study and research further, which leads her to self-understanding in understanding her Arab roots. Moreover, she intends to pursue this interest abroad, looking at American universities to apply to. Even though her intention is to acquire a better grasp on the social history of the Middle East, she does not mention Qatar University as an option either in the past or present, and she even considers leaving the country for the U.S. to study it at the American institutions she considers best.

Answering a question about her goals becoming clear, NUS refers to her experience in the Semester Abroad that she spent studying law at Harvard University in the U.S. For the

participants who studied in different countries, these periods of their lives constitute a shared and formative experience. NUS's particular interest in law has become clear for her at Harvard University. Based on this experience, she has decided to pursue an education in law, which strongly influences her identity through her future prospects. Her preference for Western education is demonstrated by her comparing her Harvard experience with her studies at Northwestern University, Qatar. "[Studying at Harvard] was really amazing like...it's very, very different, being in a big campus, big classrooms...and everything and... But the like the classes weren't harder than here, it was the same level of classes, even the law school classes" (ll. 181-187, NUS). This has led her to appreciate the quality of education she has received at Northwestern. In contrast, about Qatar University, she just says, "I never considered Qatar University, it was never an option" (ll. 453-454, NUS). Therefore, her preference for international education is so strong that she does not even consider national education in talking about the quality of education. The national Qatari university was completely ignored when she applied to higher education.

Based on the participants' experiences, there is certainly a perceived clash of academic cultures (Rostron, 2009) involved; however, it is far from being the defining characteristic of the situation. The clash is manifest when IAS expresses that even foreign universities should be Qatari in a sense of respecting and embodying the fundamentals of Qatari culture. On the other hand, there is no clash insofar as some of the participants (GUS and NUS) did not even consider going to the national university. In their experience, there is no competition. Probably the most convincing way to understand the situation, as far as the thesis is able to judge based on the participants' experiences, is that there is a contested hybridization in the academic culture of Qatar. It is contested because some do experience international universities to be alien in Qatar; however, it is a hybridization because importing and situating international institutions in Qatar seems to cause some transformations that lead Arab students

to be able to find and express their Arab identity through education at international institutions.

Contra Rostron (2009), the clash does not seem to stem from the clash between academic cultures per se but from the universities' connections to Western and non-Western sources of cultural influence. For instance, Rostron says that in Education City, students are encouraged to discuss, independently research and take responsibility for their learning, while the Qatari school system was focused on a more traditional, reproductive teacher authority-centered approach (p. 225). Even if this was the situation, the participants of the present study did not seem to identify such aspects as controversial. Moreover, as the RAND policy reformation suggestions demonstrate, Qatar has taken steps in the direction of addressing the discrepancy between traditional educational methods and Western educational outlook. How these changes affect the students is another problem.

Another problematic claim of Rostron (2009) is that liberal arts education, and especially humanities education, is less valuable in terms of job opportunities in Qatar and so students are often less motivated to study humanities. According to Rostron, this is part of the clash of academic cultures because the Qatari academic culture is focused on pragmatic outcomes while the Western liberal arts culture sees humanities as having intrinsic value. Insofar as the participants of the present study are concerned, the assertion that humanities education is not valuable on the job market is definitely debatable. As mentioned before, based on the experiences of the participants, the educational culture in Qatar should be seen as a hybrid in which there are clashes of various cultural forces, but not clashes of academic cultures in a binary opposition. The clash is much less about conceptualizations of knowledge and education and more about the linguacultural situation and educational policies.

Considering the empirical data of the present study, Rostron's (2009) view of a binary opposition between academic cultures seems to rely on dated information. Her assumption,

based on an article published 24 years before the paper, is about the motivation for Qatari students. According to her, the educational culture in Qatar emphasizes education for extrinsic reasons, for jobs, and so on. In her view, liberal arts education clashes with Qatari educational culture because the Western model of education offers knowledge for the sake of knowledge, which is foreign or alien in Qatar. In sharp contrast, all of the participants in the present study have expressed that they seek personal gratification in their education and their identities are closely related to their academic paths. Their view of education could not be farther away from education-for-extrinsic-motivation. GUS wants to pursue her education to become a doctoral student and eventually a part of academia. IAS has chosen not to be an engineer, which is a more marketable skill, but to pursue liberal arts education at Qatar University. TUS is an engineer with a vested interest in liberal arts subjects. Therefore, the manifestations of the clash should not be imagined as the stereotypical Qatari student, seeking only job opportunities and money, walking into a Western, liberal arts “house of knowledge”, being dumbfounded by the institution.

An example of a different sort of clash than what Rostron (2009) mentions could be NUS explaining that the application procedure is not straightforward for Qatari students, especially the deadline for application for which many Qatari students are late. In her words, students are not properly prepared for the procedure. Qatar University, the national university, works with a later application deadline, so students have time to think about academic paths after graduation. This is the standard for the application procedure in the country, so there is a clash between academic expectations and academic preparation that NUS is definitely aware of.

IAS gives another vivid example of problems that a hybridized academic culture has. First, he entered the Academic Bridge Program that serves as a preparation stage before the international education of Qatar Foundation Universities. He explains that he believes the

project of Qatar Foundation to be a “marvelous initiative” and “the future of Qatar” (l. 596, IAS). The problem, according to IAS, is not with the import of Western education in general. It can be understood that he believes the clash is not between two general powers of Western and Qatari academic cultures: “But the problem was not with Qatar Foundation as Qatar Foundation, but with some universities inside” (l. 598, IAS. Even more specifically, he had problems with the cultural sensitivity of professors. He thinks that “diversity of thoughts” is a positive thing, but “the way that the children were raised in a specific way, should not be changed” (ll. 610-612, IAS).

In general, the examples above and throughout the interviews demonstrate that the clash of academic cultures is prompted often by the linguacultural situation and its implications for education. The entry requirements for universities, to which the thesis returns later as well, might impose standards of English proficiency and Western methods of evaluation (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.) that are not culturally sensitive. These standard tests can only measure language abilities if we think of them as conforming to native speaker standards and not if we conceive these abilities as skills for communicative efficiency in an ELF framework. Also, if one considers English not as a fixed, central variety and the proficiency of English speakers is not measured as conforming to native speaker norms, then such an imposition of Western educational policies can seem somewhat flawed and inconsiderate.

Altogether, this subsection has explored the connection between the identities of the participants and their education in terms of identity as negotiated belonging in educational contexts. Participants share the experience of education that portrays it as an arena of self-expression and self-development. In this way, their education either causes them joy and gratification or they strive for it to be so. Gratification and joy are the phenomena that signal whether a student has found his or her studies to be adequate for his or her self-expression and

self-development. For the project of her self-expression and self-development, the relationships with teachers are crucial. Some participants of this study (notably TUS and MCS) manifest a diminished or more independent sense of gratification if they lack the relationships with their professors that would enhance their educational self-expression and self-development. The others (IAS, GUS and NUS) have good and close relationships with their teachers, which strongly influences the way that they can find joy in what they study. The participants share some aspects of how they see their future prospects and success. For most of them, education is an integral part of it. Again for TUS and MCS, education is an integral part insofar as it assists them making their purposes and goals clearer. Finally, with the important exception of IAS, the participants demonstrate a strong preference for Western education over national education (which might be connected to Findlow's [2006] findings regarding the preference for English-language education in the United Arab Emirates). In this section, the paper debated the claims of Rostron (2009) about a general academic clash and argued for a different view of the clash that stems from the linguacultural situation, from conceptualizing English in a non-ELF framework and from implementing Western-influenced educational policies that are not culturally sensitive to the local situation. In the case of IAS, his preferences indicate that he envisions an ideal and balanced picture of education, to which the paper returns to in considering his experiences and views regarding the language situation in Qatar. Before that, the next section is concerned with the connection between identity and academic achievement based on what has been described above about identity and education.

3. Academic Achievement and Identity

3.1 Achievement in terms of self-development. Levels and standards of academic achievement are of great importance in the Gulf region. In Qatar, one of the main motivating forces behind the comprehensive reform of the education system is a concern about low levels of academic achievement in the country. As Zellman et al. (2009) state, the K-12 reform in

establishing the independent secondary school system is a significant step on the secondary level to raise levels of achievement. On the other hand, the researchers argue that reaching the international standards of achievement will require many years of “sustained effort” (p. 122).

As Andrade (2006) describes “[a]cademic achievement refers to evidence of learning, which may be measured by successful completion of course requirements, grade point average (GPA), satisfactory academic standing or retention” (p. 134). In order to conduct a study of achievement from the perspectives of the students (Wiggan, 2007), the interview design had a section dedicated to questions about the ways the participants see their achievement. It seems that for the participants of the present study, academic achievement is not easily isolated and circumscribed from other types of achievement. It is not the case that the students absolutely ignore grades, tests, and so on, and they still think in terms of them about achievement. However, they experience achievement as always interconnected with their projects of self-development, their gratification, and so forth. In the theoretical framework of Berger’s and Luckmann’s (1966) social constructionism, this could be understood as a phenomenon that demonstrates the importance of not just the immediate but also the wider social context as constructive in relating identity to achievement. In Berger and Luckmann, the formation of the self is mediated through significant others interacting with the environment. Achievement, as the participants experience it, is strongly related to the perceived success or failure of this self-mediation process.

IAS expresses the connection between identity and achievement most explicitly: “when I do an exam, it’s not about the grades. I don’t care about the grades, I care about myself, whether I will do good or not [...] at the end of the day, it’s a matter of personal satisfaction, ok, that will lead to achieve my dreams” (ll. 904-910, IAS). This points to a crucial fact in the lifeworld of IAS, namely that achievement should not be understood in terms of grades. Even though he is an over-achiever and one of the few students with an over-

ninety-five graduation percentage when he left secondary school, his view is that standard measures of evaluation like grading are insignificant compared to “personal satisfaction”. It seems that his experience makes a difference between standard academic achievement and the achievement stemming from self-development, with the latter being much more important.

In talking about her grades and the effort they require, GUS explains that for her it depends on the subject of her studies: “for example like I said sort of history, theology and literature, that I always found easy because it was easy to sit down and do research for it, to do readings, to write the essays, I enjoyed writing the essays for a lot of my subjects” (ll. 2341-2344, GUS). The previous section has outlined the significance of gratification and how it is related to identity. Now, GUS expresses a thought about how this manifests in the efforts that achievement requires. If she enjoys the subject, the task is easy. In subjects where she is not “engaged” with them, she performs less, as with a management class at Qatar University: “I was not engaged with it, got a B+ [laughs]” (l. 2391, GUS). This indicates that GUS is an over-achiever, but performs best when the subject is engaging and interesting for her. Achievement depends on her interests, which ultimately derive from her identity, as it has been shown in the previous section. Consequently, achievement is strongly related to her developing self in education.

Differently to GUS, in NUS’s experience, getting good grades is hard and requires a lot of effort. She shares the view with GUS that interests and gratification play important roles in achievement; however, she does not think about the connection in terms of levels of difficulty. Rather, as it is shown later, she relates it to different types of evaluation. The reason why NUS makes the effort required to get good grades is intriguing. She says that “[i]t makes you feel good when you do” (l. 969, NUS). “Feeling good” here immediately ties the effort to achieve gratification and personal satisfaction, as it is the case with the others. She states that, in her experience, there is no pressure in order to get good grades for the job

market because, as a Qatari, she feels her post-educational prospects to be secure. Rather than being motivated by that then, her motivation and efforts to achieve depend on how it makes her feel joy about her development.

TUS and MCS are both different from the participants above in the sense that they cannot be described as over-achievers. TUS's GPA is around 2.5, while MCS describes herself as getting good grades by which she means to be below A and B. His GPA does not bother TUS, as he says, he means to keep it at this level for his employer.¹⁷ On the other hand, he is doing better in "non-technical" courses, by which he means courses of the social sciences. And since "non-technical" courses are what really interest him, this indicates the important connection between interests and achievement. TUS does better when he is interested, and in this way, his GPA is not the only standard of achievement. Therefore, the notion of achievement is applied in two senses. One is the GPA, which is less significant than the second, his performance in courses he enjoys and which interest him. In his words, "[m]y grade is good enough, it's not bad that...I'm barely going through it bas it yaeeni it's good enough that yes, I have the knowledge with me and I can build on it later on" (ll. 1862-1864, TUS 2012).

The first reason TUS gives for his GPA follows from him describing himself as a "family man", which means that his primary responsibilities are non-academic. Regarding achievement, this signals that in his lifeworld, achievement cannot be restricted merely to the academic type. Because of his primary responsibilities, he cannot invest as much effort and energy as he could otherwise. Secondly, there are differences in studies, subjects and professors. According to TUS, his strengths lie in teamwork and communication and not in

¹⁷ TUS, as many other Qatari students, has a company as a sponsor that finances his education if certain conditions, like a level of GPA, are met. This could also be a reason behind his education not being as gratifying as for others.

abstract academics, in contrast with students whose strengths lie in memorizing books and getting straight As, as he says. However, for him, these are all valid measures of achievement that cannot be simply separated from academic achievement. In addition, he talks about the teaching styles of certain professors that “my personality isn’t compatible with it” (ll. 1896-1897, TUS 2012). So, at the core of his achievement issues is his personality: responsibilities, skills, teaching and learning styles should all be considered with regards to achievement. Lastly, gratification is a significant factor in effort and result as well: “I can sometimes put more more effort...in a...in a subject or in a course compared to other people, more than them. Even the A students, If I enjoy the the course” (ll. 2060-2061, TUS 2012). All in all, TUS’s case supports the consideration that the participants do not see academic achievement merely in terms of GPA or grades, but for them it is a complex phenomenon that relates to their identities (through interests and gratification), and they experience it as an indicator of self-development.¹⁸

3.2 Achievement and forms of evaluation. As the previous subsection has demonstrated, the participants of this study do not conceive of achievement merely in terms of GPA or grades. If this is so, then it becomes an intriguing question, how this relates to methods of evaluation, such as tests and exams. All of the participants prefer less standardized and individual forms of evaluation. Instead of tests and exams, they desire to be evaluated based on their research projects and papers, for instance. Generally, this study interprets this fact as follows: the participants find these independent and individual endeavors as the best forms of their academic self-expression, related to their identities.

¹⁸ MCS’s interview (October 16, 2012) did not provide data about this facet of achievement, but as it is shown in the following subsection, she does share a similar experience of achievement when it is about academic evaluation methods.

For instance, MCS explains that if she were to choose a form of evaluation, it would be projects. She argues that some of the tests and exams are easier when they pose direct questions, but some that require writing and analysis are harder because of the time constraints. For these reasons, she prefers to be evaluated based on her projects.

“Because...umm...because I take my time in it. I can...umm...I can fix it, I can add on it...I can predict new idea, how to present it. Umm...I can make it it tighter. Like that. So I have time, a long time” (Il. 1753-1773, MCS). Consequently, in her experience, MCS can achieve higher if the form of evaluation is such that she has the time to work on it independently, to “fix”, to “add”, to “present” and to “make it tighter”. All these verbs and the frequent use of “I” signal that these projects are ways of her academic self-expression that she prefers to more traditional evaluation methods.

In TUS’s experience, tests and exams are “only for the for the professors to yaeeni [I mean]...twist your arm” (l. 1996, TUS 2012). He sees these methods of evaluation as completely unnecessary for his academic self-development because they are externally forced means to subjectively judge his progress. In relation to achievement, this also supports his stance that achievement should not only be measured by standard and traditional methods. Talking about the subjective nature of evaluation, TUS states:

Umm...especially when it’s a report or or a...an presentation. That becomes even more subjective and...umm...you might find it very easy because of that...because that’s the way you work...or or you’re very yaeeni [I mean] you’re you you’re way of thinking is very compatible with the professor’s (Il. 2002-2005, TUS 2012) .

So, as he explains, evaluating a presentation is not only subjective but also relative as an indicator of achievement because they do not take into consideration teaching and learning styles and their compatibility. The main problem for him is that he perceives himself as someone who is “not...a very good reader” (l. 2022, TUS 2012). As it has been mentioned, he

sees his talents in communicative skills, cooperation and teamwork, and the academic focus on books and reading hinders his ability to achieve. Nevertheless, there are some exams that he is good at, and it mostly depends on the aforementioned compatibility between personalities, teaching and learning styles. In this way, his identity plays an emphatic role in how he experiences tests and exams and their relation to achievement.

Similarly to MCS, NUS states that she prefers to be evaluated based on research papers and projects. She also uses the expression “take your time” (l. 960, NUS). In one sense, she experiences papers and projects as harder, but they are worth the invested time and energy. NUS does not elaborate on these forms of evaluation, partly because she does not have a ground for comparison, as they did not have many exams and tests at Northwestern University, Qatar. Still, what she says can be interpreted along similar lines like the others. Based on her interest in education, in continuing her education and finding her true interests at the university, it is probably safe to say that her preference for research papers and projects is intimately connected to her identity. For instance, she recites an experience of creating a documentary in one of her production classes that was highly time-consuming but she was willing to spend the time and energy in order to finish the project. The reason for this is that she enjoyed the work and she was interested. Above (2.1) it has been explained that she experiences education as an arena where she can creatively mediate her identity. The evaluation methods she prefers them are ones that allow these creative self-mediations in education.

For GUS, the situation is similar. “I don’t like exams. [...] I...I for me, I don’t find it as...umm...engaging. I like writing papers you know even if you give me a short deadline” (ll. 2406-2011, GUS). As for NUS, even if it is harder, GUS opts for papers because it is a more engaging evaluation method for her. What she emphasizes about papers is to express her own perspective, to investigate an interesting subject and to be creative. She enjoys working

on essays that she can deal with “from [her] own perspective”. In addition, as with the other participants, she finds exams to be a less adequate form of evaluation because of the time constraint, the requirement of “memorizing”, which all make it “limiting”. In conclusion, she states that exams necessitate more effort than papers, even though papers take more time. The reason for this is that she does not enjoy the preparation for the exams and they take place in a “stressful environment”. Consequently, she clearly expresses her preference for individual and independent evaluation methods, such as research papers, because they are a better fit to her learning style and personality. Her experience supports the idea that the preference for these forms of evaluation is closely related to the participants’ identities insofar as they can be seen as academic forms of self-expression, for which methods that are creative and do not impose a stressful time constraints are better channels.¹⁹

3.3 Volunteering, extracurricular activities and achievement. As it has been described, the participants of this study do not confine the concept of achievement merely to their academic activities. Standards of achievement and methods of evaluation play different roles for them, but they still experience achievement in a more holistic way, meaning that they consider non-academic challenges, responsibilities and successes as integral part of their overall achievement. One of the most intriguing areas of achievements, related to academics, can be examined through looking at their experiences in volunteering and extracurricular activities.

In answering a question about his identity, IAS quickly refers to himself as a member of the Youth Advisory Board and the Reach Out to Asia program and also as a founder of youth committees. From this fact, it is clear that these are strongly related to his identity, in

¹⁹ IAS’s view is not considered here because he did not explicitly address the differences between different forms of evaluation. However, based on his other views, namely that he definitely sees academic evaluation and achievement in personal terms, it is safe to assume that this has an impact on the way he perceives tests, exams and papers.

his words, as a “youth activist” (l. 19, IAS). Being a youth activist is a way for him to apply his knowledge that he has acquired at his university, and because of this, these volunteering and extracurricular activities are not connected to his identity in isolation but interconnected with his identity in education as well. Some experiences of attending conferences in this context are formative experiences of his educational career.

For IAS, volunteering is not a simple activity to spend time outside of the university but something that is has a deep connection with his identity and not only his identity in education. In explaining how the concept of volunteering transformed the traditional Arab concept of “fazaa” [“initiator”]²⁰, he says: “So basically they converted the cultural concept of “fazaa” to volunteering in the Asian Games. We volunteered, we learned, everything was you know you felt that you are now more Qatari because you are volunteering, and that really also helped me” (ll. 397-399, IAS). In these terms, the formative experience of volunteering has acquired cultural and social significance of IAS. In his lifeworld, volunteering is an undertaking of social responsibilities, of acting on the communal belongings that are so strongly related to his identity: “Especially during that I was setting my goals, Asian Games came you know, I said ‘ok, I’m more Qatari now, I have to help this country more, I have to build it’, and that’s what happened” (ll. 399-401, IAS). In terms of achievement then, it is safe to say that IAS sees applying the educational knowledge in these identity-forming and identity-related situations similarly to academic challenges. This further supports the idea that the notion of achievement cannot be restricted to academic achievement if the participants’ experiences are considered.

Similarly, MCS’s volunteering experience has influenced her strongly: “And...umm...then I...I took another path [besides education] to develop myself I I go

²⁰ The Arabic “*fazaa*” commonly means “rescue”, but IAS is drawing the parallel with its connotation as “initiators of help”.

to...volunteering. [...] Yeah, I loved volunteering, I volunteered for ROTA [Reach Out to Asia] (ll. 342-346, MCS)". Saying this, MCS establishes volunteering as an avenue of self-development on par with education. However, for her, this first experience was not fruitful. As she explains, because of her media studies, she expected to be able to take part in the workings of the media room, but she was there merely as an observer. This observer role did not fit with her identity and preferences, which ultimately resulted in her dissatisfaction, but despite this, she believes that the experience was beneficial. The benefits of this experience are first that she managed to learn from observing the workings of the media room, and second that there was a supervisor who took interest in her unrelated designing work and invited her to a youth magazine to volunteer and work there. This experience at the youth magazine was educational not only in realizing her dormant talents as a designer but also as an exercise in building important relationships as well.

Fortunately for her, the time she volunteered at a documentary film festival was much more satisfying than Reach Out to Asia. "Here I...I really...umm...enjoyed...being there because they...we used to write...to write reports, so from there I learned how to...how to interview [...] how to write" (ll. 402-407, MCS). It is again a striking feature of this experience that gratification and education are strongly connected. Also, she seems to share the view with IAS that these activities significantly complement university education with a practical and applicable dimension of knowledge. After these experiences, she had become interested in the university's media club and became the designer. However, her role was not restricted to that of the designer, but she also had to participate in event organization, for instance. Regarding achievement, it is easy to see her volunteering path as a success story in the sense that from the dissatisfaction with the experience at Reach Out to Asia, she went on to participate in different activities with success and in the end, now she is a president of the

media club at her university. All in all, both the notions of education and of achievement are broader for these participants than it can be expected.

The extracurricular activities of GUS are all academic activities. Since she is very serious about her academic future, she does not confine achievement within the boundaries of her courses, exams, and so forth. She volunteers and participates in various research projects. Even after mentioning how she dislikes economics, she stated that she was involved with the professors of her economics class in a research project for which she conducted interviews. In addition, she mentions that there was a visiting professor at Georgetown University Qatar from the main American campus in the previous semester with whom she discussed the possibility of writing and presenting a paper together. These extracurricular academic activities suggest that GUS's sense of achievement cannot be understood only with reference to standard measures of academic achievement such as GPA.

As mentioned, TUS has a sponsor and a contract, which requires him to keep his GPA above 2.5. As also described, he has lost interest in his engineering studies. As an extracurricular activity, for example, he takes summer courses: "I take those courses in the summer because they're more enjoyable in the summer. You get less people, you get shorter courses, they're more intense" (ll. 1843-1845, TUS 2012). The problem for him is that his sponsor does not take these courses into account. He does this because it is gratifying for him, regardless of GPA and other requirements. TUS enjoys the subject matter, the intensity and the discussion. In this case, this demonstrates that achievement is closely connected to personal gratification, even if it does not count towards his GPA or even if his sponsor does not recognize it.

In the case of NUS, she mentions an example where her curricular activity turned into an extracurricular one. Her preference for independent research and non-standard evaluation has already been outlined. Now, in one of her production classes, her project was to create a

short documentary film. She has put a lot of effort and energy into it, and she illustrates the need to work if one wants to get good grades with this example. However, her sense of achievement is not restricted to the academic: her short documentary was accepted to Doha's Tribeca Film Festival for the "Made in Qatar" section. Even though she studies media and she is interested in education, she has another field in which she can claim success. As she says: "I like to pursue lot of different fields" (l. 922, NUS). For her, extracurricular activity counts as achievement, and it is ultimately gratifying.

The participants see their quasi-educational activities as part of their overall education, as the applicatory-practical component that complements their university education. Regarding achievement, if they are successful at these activities, their experience indicates that they have a similar sense of achievement as in the case of performing well at their universities. In integrating their volunteering and extracurricular activities and achievements with education, the participants shed a light on how their conception of education is broader and deeper than just academics. The linchpin of these broader notions is identity, as demonstrated by how these participants treat educational and quasi-educational activities as opportunities for self-expression and self-development.

In sum of this section, the most important conclusion is that achievement is not a concept that can easily be restricted to academic performance in the lifeworlds of the participants. As a student-based inquiry (Wiggan, 2007), the present paper has attempted to examine the experiences of the students in relation to achievement. It has turned out that the participants operate with a wider and deeper notion of achievement in which holistic concept academic achievement plays only a part. Moreover, academic achievement is not only seen in terms of GPA, grades and performance at exams but also in terms of self-expression and self-development (academic or otherwise), which experience indicates an intimate connection between identity and achievement. Since the participants express that gratification,

relationships with professors, and so on, influence their studies, motivation and performance, and since these are all experienced by them as related to their identities, it is plausible to say that achievement is also related to it.

4. Bilingual Ideals and the Actual Language Situation

This last section of the analysis is an attempt to discover how, in the experiences of the participants, the complex language situation in Qatar enters into the picture above about the interconnections between identity and education. The findings here present qualitative data about the experiences of the participants regarding these issues. Based on what has been stated previously, it seems to be an intriguing phenomenon that the participants mainly conduct their studies in English, be it at the national or at an international university, despite their first language being Arabic. It is this academic dominance of English that has prompted many researchers to consider it as a threat to Arabic. For instance, Troudi (2009) argues that since English is intimately tied to neo-colonial oppression, its dominance in the area of education leads to the marginalization of Arabic. The interpretation above demonstrates that one of the most striking features of education for the participants is that they experience it as a prominent avenue of self-expression and self-development. If this is so, then it must be addressed how the fact that they have to conduct self-expression and self-development in a dominantly English-speaking context influences their identities-in-education.

4.1 Language and identity. In the social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1966), language plays an important role of self-formation. As it has been mentioned in various places, for Berger and Luckmann, self-formation is mediated through significant others in the environment. The paradigmatic form of this mediation is linguistic, namely face-to-face interactions with significant others. These interactions serve the process of socialization that initiates the self into the social order.

Based on the empirical findings, it seems plausible to treat identity as negotiated belonging. The negotiation is partly linguistic and part of the socialization process, as understood by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Regarding language then, it is relevant that Suleiman (2003) conceptualizes the Arabic language as the “linchpin” of identities for Arab nationalist tendencies (p. 224). Considering the importance of being a Qatari and being an Arab for the participants, it can then be stated that their national or Arab belongings are strongly connected to the Arabic language. The participants of the study have all expressed views that set up a strong connection between language and identity. It is worth to quote IAS at length as he explains the importance of Arabic:

Umm...regarding Arabic language...umm...it's a very important language. And I think that it's my duty...especially because I'm living in this transitional period as a young Qatari male, I think it's a very very important for me and for the coming generation to be proud of this language. It's not...umm...it's not you know a normal language to me. It's a language that had the honor of carrying the message of...umm...a holy religion. Umm...it's...umm...it's a language that that it's an international language because maybe even non-Arabs are speaking it and...and our you know sort of...umm...way of thinking, it's like a norm that we have that “if you speak Arabic, you're an Arab” (ll. 78-85, IAS).

In this complex expression, IAS relates Arabic to many factors that are cornerstones of identity for all the participants: religion and being an Arab. It can be interpreted as follows. By being bound up with religion, Arabic has acquired an exceptional role in his experience. This role is manifest in prescribing duties, primarily the duty of maintaining the language with pride for posterity. Arabic has a value and an ability to shape thinking in how it transmits norms, for example in establishing Arab identity. Elaborating, IAS experiences Arabic as carrier of not only religion but also of culture, habits and identity. In terms of identity, he sees

Arabic as “something that makes you unique” (l. 91, IAS), which means that Arabic is significant for distinguishing the people for whom it is a pillar of identity. Identity, in his experience, is being unique and irreducible to others, which is sustained by language. In conclusion, he states the absolute necessity of language for identity: “You cannot survive in today’s world without Arabic language because if you’ll not have language, you basically you will you will not have an identity” (ll. 91-93, IAS). Using a strong word such as “survive” means that belonging to something unique, such as the Arab state of Qatar that simultaneously belongs to the bigger communities of the Arab world and humanity in general, is crucial if one is to endure globalization.

MCS also expresses the connection between Arabic and identity in terms of language preservation efforts: “Because Arabic is important also, we need to keep our identity [short laugh] [...] in Arabic language” (ll. 1517-1522, MCS). Saying this allows for an important understanding of her views and experiences, namely that language loss leads to loss of identity. In turn, language preservation is identity preservation as well. Therefore, in her experience, language is absolutely necessary for identity. She also mentions how important Arabic is for religion, so as the others, she sees Arabic as tied to one of the most essential aspects of her identity, to Islam.

TUS begins replying to a question about Arabic by saying “Arabic does have...umm...extreme importance to me. Because...that’s our language, that’s who we are” (ll. 2066-2067, TUS 2012). In changing to the first-person plural, TUS expresses a general thought and a communal belonging. He is essentially saying, “language is who we are”, which means that he thinks of the necessity of language for identity in even stronger terms than IAS. What he says is not that Arabic is indispensable for identity but that it is the same as identity. It is not exactly clear how he conceives this identity-relation, but what is clear is the fact that

in the lifeworlds of IAS and TUS, Arabic is inextricably bound up with identity. They share experiences and views about its importance.

GUS's case is intriguing from many perspectives. When she is asked about Arabic, she answers: "a little bit embarrassing [laughs] topic because...umm...my Arabic sadly is not as good as I'd like it to be..." (Il. 175-176, GUS). She means that her Standard Arabic, the *fussha*, is not very strong, but her colloquial is fine, she can speak, read and write well. The reason for this, in her view, is that she has been through an English-speaking school system where studying Arabic was more or less a nuisance.²¹ In her experience, the necessary emphasis on Arabic has been "forgotten" by the governmental support of international education. In addressing this necessary emphasis, GUS says "the Arabic is an incredibly necessary part [...] and because a lot of it does tie with identity, with culture, with language, with society" (Il. 363-368, GUS). Saying this makes her the third participant who is consciously, albeit somewhat vaguely, aware of the connection between language and identity. According to her to "truly understand" one's self, belonging to the Arab world or to Qatar, there is a need for the Arabic language because these form one's sense of identity through the influence of the past.

Similarly to GUS, NUS shares the experience of lacking proficiency in Arabic because of the school system. She contrasts the case of talking to her family and friends, which is not an issue for her, with that of having to conduct her studies in Arabic that is very hard because of her English-speaking international education. She does not explicitly state the connection between her identity and the Arabic language, but when she talks about her effort to read Islamic texts in Arabic, it sheds light on how important it is, considering how religion is a

²¹ "because I used to take private exams [...] like sort of homeschool exams in Arabic [...] but I'd attend a British school [...] And I would always about...I'd always be like 'why do I have to attend both' [...] You know. Most... [...] everyone I know only goes to one, why should I...why should I do it you know twice [...] the amount of exams you know" (Il. 217-242, GUS).

cornerstone of her identity. Also, she expresses her discontent with her level of Arabic (“I can barely write” [l. 1645, NUS], she says) but attributes it to greater social processes that concern the dominance of English in Qatar. It is an interesting fact that she does not mention any theoretical considerations between the relation of language and identity, but in talking about it mostly in practical terms (for university, for work, etc.) reveals that she deeply cares about preserving Arabic.

4.2 Preservation versus opening-up. As Al-Rashdan (2010) argues about the need for educational reforms in the Arab world, “[t]he native humanitarian and cultural values of the Arab world must start this reform and respond to what globalization has imposed upon it” (p. 90). In this regard, it is crucial to investigate how the participants see the impositions of globalization, especially in terms of languages. One of the main themes in IAS’s interview focuses on the consequences of globalization and particularly on the situation of Qatar, where the Qatari population is in minority compared to the large majority of foreigners. IAS thinks about these consequences both in terms of culture and language. Regarding culture, IAS believes that one of the main challenges facing Qatar is culture maintenance in face of difficulties because there are efforts of being a globalized country, of modernization and of establishing well-working relationships with other countries.²²

IAS expresses analogous views about language. “Arabic is facing many challenges and I think that if we as youth did not sustain Arabic language, did not empower Arabic language, I think the coming generation will will will definitely definitely definitely suffer and they will lose their identity” (ll. 86-89, IAS). Interpreting this complex thought leads to the insight that IAS’s experience connects cultural preservation with language preservation and also with issues of power and consequences for the future. Regarding power, IAS

²² “First of all it’s we cannot go...sorry, we want to go outside but we wanna maintain our culture. We want them to come inside us but also we wanna maintain our culture” (ll. 220-222, IAS).

conceptualizes languages in terms of strength: there are weak and strong languages, depending on their wider social and cultural context. The relationship is explicit in the following brief utterance: “I will not respect my nation if it doesn’t have a strong language” (ll. 93-94, IAS).

He sees English as a strong and dominant language. Its strength and dominance bring about disadvantageous results. However, IAS says, English is important for reasons of self-presentation. In this way, English is conceived as a necessity, connected to the collective intention of promoting Qatari identity and to establish and further relationships with other countries. On the other hand, he refers to the “tyranny of globalization” that affects local culture “negatively” and “unfortunately” (ll. 179-180, IAS). IAS’s experiences of the situation lead him to develop a balanced view, in which he sees both the advantages and disadvantages of the dominance of English. In changing habits and mentalities, according to him, some changes are positive and some are negative. He evaluates the changes based on whether they are in “contradiction with religion and culture” or not. If a change in habits contradicts what he sees as a cultural principle, for instance, then it is a negative change. Based on these remarks, it seems that his experiences point to a view of English not only as an oppressive mono-cultural force (cf. Pakir, 2009), but also as a medium that can be employed in balance with Arabic.

MCS also experiences the language situation within the wider socio-cultural context and argues for the need of preservation. One of her key expressions is “invasion”. In her words, “So the English invade us [short laugh] very strongly” (ll. 104-108, MCS). Using this militaristic metaphor indicates that she sense the relationship between the colonial past and the present situation (cf. Pennycook, 1998). She sees that traditions are still relevant, but similarly to IAS, she thinks that from the perspective of the Arabic language, there is a cultural weakness, so to speak. This weakness is attribute to the “double-edged” (another key

phrase) nature of the fact that “the world is open now” (l. 156, MCS). By “double-edged”, she refers to the ambiguity that contains both positive and negative sides, both advantages and disadvantages. One of the negative sides and disadvantages is the erosion of culture and native language, as she experiences it. This is one of the consequences of Qatar’s opening-up to global relationships. In her view, it has a number of positive consequences as well, like the discussion, dialogue, getting to know other cultures and the ability to share, but the most pertinent negative effect is related to losing “some of our identities” in connection to culture and language. A vivid example of this, as she mentions, is teenagers talking in English, aspiring to mimic Western identities and habits. For these teenagers, speaking English is “cool”, in contrast to Arabic, and for this reason, Arabic is “weak” (l. 155, MCS). Such a consideration complements the perceived binary opposition between Arabic and English that is mentioned by Findlow (2006). It seems that MCS’s experience indicates that English is not only a language of modernization and science, for example, but also one of having an attractive social status among youth, while Arabic is seen as tied to the older generation and “uncool” social status.

TUS is sympathetic to the trend of opening up. He sees his experience of studying in Ireland as a way of acquiring a perspective that is open to differences, to use his expression, to “the other”. He criticizes the prejudices about different people and cultures that he believes to be prominent in Qatar. As he says, in order to count as part of “developed countries”, Qatar needs to admit of the values of these countries such as “acceptance” and “open-mindedness” (ll. 2587-2589, TUS 2012). As it has been described before, he is also in favor of a progressive and open-minded way of education, which is represented by American education for him.

Possibly following the trend of opening up, the key expression of TUS about the dominance of English, particularly in education, is that it is “a fact of life” (l. 2900, TUS

2012). Illustrating the dominance, he refers to the process of using borrowed English words in Arabic and watching TV shows in English. With the expression “a fact of life”, he means to signal that the situation is basically out of individual control and one has to adapt to it. Radically, “[e]ither you do it or you die” (l. 2899, TUS 2012). Since the economy is dependent on relationships with other countries and on communication in English and since the peculiar demographic situation of Qatar where the majority of people are not proficient in Arabic, it is not a simple matter of choosing to speak Arabic as the dominant language for one point onwards. According to TUS, this is not about fairness. He thinks of this issue in a wide socio-cultural perspective in attempting to understand the reason for people not only ignoring English but “going the other way” (l. 1431, TUS 2012).

As TUS believes, English is not “bad in itself”, but “it shouldn’t be taking the place of Arabic” (l. 2107, TUS 2012), which “place taking” is what the previous examples illustrate. Moreover, paradoxically, English is needed for the preservation of Arabic, as TUS sees it. Similarly to IAS (whose expression for the ideal use of English is “catalyst”), TUS thinks that English can be used as a tool “to gain success and gain influence and gain...umm...gain the knowledge and education that allows them to understand the world” (ll. 2124-2125, TUS 2012). His example is the Egyptian “Arab Spring”, and he sees the revolution as using English as a tool to regain power, for example through messages on the social networking sites. Saying this, he connects the preservation of Arabic with the wider social, cultural and economic circumstances. In his view, English is necessary not only for daily life but also in order to regain power that is needed for the preservation of Arabic. Similarly to the paradox that Romani (2009) describes, namely that the nationalist project of educational reform requires reliance on Western institutions and manpower, TUS argues for the paradoxical situation where the preservation of Arabic necessitates English.

GUS's experience regarding English provides further insight into the relationship between the languages. As she says, she considers herself "as fluent as a native speaker" since she was educated in and studied English, but there is no cultural connection: "I don't feel any cultural connection to it" (ll. 1032-1033, GUS). She uses a strong expression to indicate why she has never considered the importance of English in her life and for her identity: "I've never actually considered English maybe because of the trauma [laughs] I've been through with my lack of Arabic..." (ll. 1025-1026, GUS). In GUS's case, her education in English, her fluency and proficiency are not signs of the cultural import of English; rather, she does not consider it to be culturally important because her lack of proficiency in Standard Arabic is traumatic. This means that cultural import is not tied to proficiency. In terms of preservation and opening-up, this can be interpreted as motivating the preservation of Arabic.

"If we're not gonna preserve our language, who will?" (l. 1687, NUS). NUS's rhetorical question directs attention simultaneously to the importance of belonging into the perceived community of Arabic speakers and to the issue of language preservation for which the community is responsible. She explains that, in her experience, the overwhelming prominence of English has serious impact. For instance, she says, "I can barely write" (l. 1645, NUS)²³ and she mentions family gatherings where she feels it to be difficult to communicate "especially [with] the older women" (l. 1695, NUS). Considering how crucial family is for her identity, this experience indicates a discrepancy in her educational identity, which is strongly connected to English, and her familial identity, which would require Arabic. In conclusion, she states that "I think Arabic should be the prominent language" (ll. 1686-1687, NUS). Citing a personal experience, she explains that older Qataris sometimes "make

²³ "What I do honestly is I write whatever I want in English, go on Google Translate, translate it, and then take it to this other website called Yamli which like you kinda type in English, but it gives you in Arabic..." (ll. 1645-1647, NUS).

fun” of her because of her speaking English (cf. Kim, 2003), and for this reason, she is “getting sick of speaking English” (l. 671, NUS). Regarding the dynamic between opening up and preservation, her experience illustrates both poles of it: through education, she is in favor of inviting Western institutions in the country for acquiring Western education, but the dominance of English and its consequences motivate language preservation efforts.

4.3 Promotion of Arabic in a multilingual ideal. IAS has vivid experiences about the dominance of English. He recounts a story about him visiting the Italian Embassy in Qatar to acquire visa for a vacation. Here he actually “had a fight” with the official who was shouting “only English” to an older Qatari man trying to carry out his business in Arabic (l. 1114, IAS). In his view, this is an unjust situation because Qatar is an Arab country and people residing in the country should respect the Arabic language. This event illustrates IAS’s discontent about the dominance of English in his daily life that conflicts with his views about how the linguistic situation should ideally be. It might be considered that the ideals of the participants seem similar to what Zakharia (2010) describes as strong bilingual models of education, in which the education language policies do not strengthen the unequal power situation in higher education.

IAS’s ideal linguistic situation is a multilingual one without unequal power relations between the different languages. Considering how important family is regarding his identity, it should be stressed that he employs the case of his father to illustrate his ideal: “My father, although he didn’t finish university, he speaks six languages [...] And and that’s the real Qatari society, it is cosmopolitan society” (ll. 113-115, IAS). His ideal then construes Qatar as a cosmopolitan society, in which there should not be unequal power relations between languages and cultures and in which Arabic occupies a prominent position. In order to achieve or approach such a situation, he believes that Arabic needs to be promoted and empowered, mostly via changing the mentalities concerning the current language situation. Briefly, people

need to be proud of the Arabic language and English should become a “catalyst” that does not dominate Arabic. In his views, pride in language and pride in identity are closely related: “So I think Arabs can do it, but they have to be proud of themselves. They have to be proud of their language”. As he concludes, a bilingual state-of-affairs can be desirable but only if “the new language will not dominate your own language” (ll. 513-514, IAS). Saying this, IAS sets up an opposition between “new” and “own”, which illustrates the traditional and conservative side of his thinking, construing English as a new language without ownership and Arabic as an old one associated with ownership. This shows again the importance of Arabic for his identity.

Concerning the future, IAS is optimistic. Despite the strong expression about the dominance of English (“English is important now [...] we are already suffering from the tyranny of...this fact” [ll. 1238-1239, IAS]), he believes that Arabic will reacquire its traditional significance. He personally makes efforts to further this goal. Referring to this paradoxical situation as “funny”, he mentions one of his efforts in *Reach Out to Asia*: “one of the goals, the new goals that we introduced was integrating Arabic language. In our country [laughs]” (ll. 1240-1241, IAS). One of the reasons for his optimism is that he connects language with respect on a social level. He believes that people will realize that they can only expect respect if they do not teach and be proud of their language. The other reason is, as he says, that there is a struggle with learning and using non-native languages, which struggle offers motivation to turn back to Arabic. All in all, IAS criticizes the current language situation in which English is dominant and Arabic is marginal. He illustrates the consequences of this inequality by his own experiences. However, he is optimistic that the future will bring the empowerment of Arabic, and he aims to do his best contribute to this empowerment.

In answering a question about whether the actual language situation fits his views, TUS replies: “Absolutely not” (ll. 2735, TUS 2012). He sees Arab culture and Arabic language in terms of power: both are weak. TUS’s position is conflicted because he sees the dominance of English as “a fact of life”, but also he asks, “why not Arabic? Why is why is Arabic a second language?” (l. 1427, TUS 2012). He finds the explanation in the interconnection between culture and power. He sees some cultures as being more dominant and more powerful than others, exercising their influence, for example, in the power relations between languages that are attached to them. In such a framework, the promotion of Arabic is not an easy task. It is rather a “huge undertaking” connected to the promotion of Arab culture, in TUS’s view.

it’s not it’s not starting teaching in Arabic again that’s gonna save it. And it’s not forcing people to talk Arabic that’s gonna save it. And it’s not that...creating institutes that protect Arabic language that’s gonna save it. It’s...changing our lives yaeeni our lifestyles and changing...yaeeni...umm...the culture...the mentality and then... [...] If you become stronger politically and socially and culturally, then everything else just follows...umm...including the language (ll. 2074-2084, TUS 2012).

In essence, the promotion of Arabic can only be achieved if the wider social, cultural and political context is enabling. Individual efforts, according to TUS, are not going to be sufficient if the context is disabling. For the context to change in order to promote Arabic, “lives”, “lifestyles”, “culture” and “mentality” all have to transform. Basically, TUS sees the promotion of Arabic as ineffective before certain preconditions are satisfied, which makes it a task that is only a consequence of thoroughgoing social, cultural and political transformation.

Nevertheless, as the other participants, TUS is also optimistic. “Fixing” the statuses of the Arab culture and the Arabic language as “weak” is “a gradual thing and it’s gonna happen, I think. It’s gonna happen” (ll. 2736-2738, TUS 2012). This process is related to power and

self-respect. When these are achieved, they are going to strengthen the status of Arabic and people will begin to use Arabic in their daily lives and not English. As it can be understood from his interview, TUS also argues for a multilingual ideal. For instance, he has begun to learn Japanese, which means that he does not only believe in the importance of Arabic and English but also in that of other languages. Similarly to other participants, he thinks that in Qatar “there’s a drive towards learning more languages” (l. 2918, TUS 2012).

MCS is also optimistic about the future. She finds support in the fact that universities are developing programs in Arabic, and her personal experience is that more and more foreigners have begun to learn Arabic. Her attachment to culture and to the Arabic language is easy to illustrate. For instance, she explains that hearing a foreigner speaking Arabic “this is something, this is like treasure”. This emotionally loaded and positive reaction indicates how important Arabic is for her. This experience reminds her of the extremely high value of Arabic that is often forgotten in everyday practices. In her words, “[w]e forget how important it is. We speak it but we forget to nourish ourself with the basics of Arabic” (ll. 2751-2752, MCS). Therefore, in her experience, it is crucial to remind people about the importance of Arabic, its connection to religion and to identity.

In talking about the relationship of Arabic and English, GUS expresses a similarly balanced view to IAS. In this, they both would agree with Mohd-Ashraf (2005) that English proficiency does not necessarily threaten Arab identity. An important difference is that GUS emphasizes the necessity of English more than the consequences of its dominance like IAS: “And so I think there needs to be some...sort of...middle... [...] and some sort of balance” (ll. 4733-4737, GUS), by which she refers to the medium of instruction at the universities as some of the subjects necessitate English. In any case, she thinks that both languages are indispensable in present day Qatar. English is required by the standards of an international and global environment. Her emphasis on the importance of Arabic has its roots in the role of

her father who is also aware of the necessity of English but in a private setting “if he hears us speaking English he’ll be like ‘leave the room’ [laughs]” (ll. 609-610, GUS). Despite GUS’s laugh and considering how significant family is for her identity, the paternal dissatisfaction with using English in the family seems like a strong motivation for highly valuing Arabic.

GUS clearly articulates that her ideal is not only a bilingual (Arabic and English) situation but a multilingual one. She believes that this is approximated on a wider social scale and that “people are starting to recognize the importance of more than one [...] and of having two minimum three, four languages” (ll. 4883-4888, GUS). She sees French and Spanish as quickly spreading. Even more, her experiences at a language-learning center demonstrate that people are learning other languages as well. Portuguese, Chinese, Russian and Turkish are some of the examples she mentions. Returning briefly to the issue of preservation and opening-up, the multilingual ideal of GUS sheds new light on it. As she says, “in the modern world [...] only knowing English, only knowing Arabic isn’t going to suffice. Or even like if you only know French is not going to suffice” (ll. 1491-1492, GUS). Instead of seeing globalization as the force behind the dominance of English, she sees it as a force that presses people to learn more languages.

NUS sees both Arabic and English as necessary in Qatar: “It’s hard to just speak one language and not speak the other here” (l. 632, NUS). While Arabic is not essential for university (though there are cases when it is needed), she sees work and the private sector as spaces where it has pragmatic value “to kinda navigate around” (l. 633, NUS). This can be interpreted as a bilingual reality, but, considering her views on the dominance of English and the preservation of Arabic, it is clear that the bilingual reality is far from the bilingual ideal that she advocates. Therefore, as with other participants, the preservation of Arabic can be seen in terms of the promotion of Arabic. NUS is also optimistic about the future of the language situation:

I think Arabic will really come back. Like people are realizing now that this is really important and we need to kinda go back to Arabic [...]. And like even people who studied their whole life in English like for example me it's kind of getting frustrating, so...like we do wanna go back to Arabic, we do kinda wanna help preserve the language, you know, get you know the younger generation to really learn the language better than we did (ll. 1706-1714, NUS).

Similarly to MCS, NUS sees the main motivation for the younger generation to speak English in it being “cool”: “kids kinda wanna use a language that seems a little bit more cool” (ll. 1783-1784, NUS). It seems that English is associated with “coolness” because of its connection to Western popular culture, such as TV shows, movies and music. In consequence, NUS criticizes the efforts of Qatar University to promote Arabic as a “heritage language”. In NUS’s view, this reinforces the status of Arabic as something of an “older generation language” which hinders its options to be seen as “cool” like English (l. 1788, NUS). Therefore it also hinders the preservation and promotion of Arabic.

4.4 Languages in education. As it has been indicated earlier, GUS sees the reason for her lack of proficiency in Standard Arabic in her education. She explains that she went to British primary and secondary schools while she would have private Arabic teachers at home (“we’d have private teachers at home but when you’re younger you don’t really take it that seriously” [ll. 182-183, GUS]). Now she has graduated at an American university, so the medium of her whole educational career is English. As she describes, the motivation for the parents to choose international schools for their children stems from the pressures of the university requirements and the job market. In her view, these are relevant concerns, but the emphatic role that Arabic plays regarding culture and identity is “forgotten”. Just as MCS uses the notion “to forget” about the value of Arabic, GUS uses it in connection to education and Arabic.

GUS studies at Georgetown University, Qatar, so she is definitely and mainly exposed to English in her studies.²⁴ The tension is, as outlined earlier, is that her subject is actually Middle-Eastern history that she works on within the boundaries of an English-only international institution. She does sense this tension, and she refers to developing a program at Georgetown for native speakers who are not sufficiently proficient in their native language. This way, she has managed to acquire “native speaker” status at Georgetown. In spite of this fact, her views demonstrate a Westernized identity. It is true that she has never consciously felt a personal connection to English, as she puts it, but English has affected her identity: “English has definitely helped me in finding that and...you know sort of reaching a point where I’m able to say well, you know I do want to continue and I do want to you know sort of study and find a good position and be able to convey the knowledge that I have...” (ll. 1152-1155, GUS). Talking about this, she ends up contrasting English and Arabic, and she explains that her attachment to Arabic might be “nostalgia for what...for what I never had [laughs]” (l. 1164, GUS). Also, education plays an important role in her identity and for her future as well, and she expresses that the best universities in the world are English-speaking, so through this channel, her identity is further affected by the prominence of English as a medium of instruction.

²⁴ “Yeah...umm...I think I am. Because you can’t honestly within an environment like this, you can’t focus only on Arabic, it is an American university, it is open to English-speakers, it is an English you know...an Eng...ahh...a university that is primarily taught in English language...you know where the subjects are primarily taught in English language [...] Of course you have like some classes in French, some classes in Arabic but...majority of the time, it’s English [...] And it is an international environment where you got student who are speaking...you know almost every single language under the Sun...umm... [laughs] [...] umm...and...so the only way to communicate is to have some sort of a common ground and of course they all speak English when they came here and...” (ll. 4113-4132, GUS) .

Despite this, it is an interesting fact that for GUS, Arabic not only has nostalgic and cultural value (cf. Findlow, 2006), but it has pragmatic relevance regarding her education and her research. GUS's subject is Middle-Eastern history, and she explains that it is important to know other languages besides English because then one is able to work with primary sources, manuscripts and documents. As she sees it, for this, the Standard Arabic is necessary because one would not be able to decipher and understand old documents based on one's dialect only. As she intends to pursue a doctoral career, she thinks that Arabic is going to be of pragmatic importance for her in the future in her field. She also generalizes this fact about the state of education. As she argues that Arabic is going to regain prominence, she thinks that the Arabic language is going to be prominent academically. Standard Arabic is necessary insofar as it should be a medium of communication "which can be accessible to everyone" (l. 3205, GUS), as GUS says. As it has been previously mentioned, GUS sees both Arabic and English as necessary: "I don't think that it should be completely all Arabic in the same way I don't think here should be completely all English" (ll. 4508-4509, GUS). Her view is that there are some programs that require English and there are some that require Arabic. She is less radical than IAS, who argues for opening different branches of Qatar University, for example, but she thinks that "there should be more of an emphasis on Arabic particularly on the region [...] and I think the university itself needs to focus more of its programs on Middle-Eastern studies in general" (ll. 4178-4184, GUS).

As NUS explains, it would be harder for her to study in Arabic. In this respect, her educational history is of utmost importance because it has been associated with English throughout her life. "Well, technically [Arabic] was my first language [...] but again since kindergarten, I was in English school, so I don't know if you..." (ll. 1486-1490, NUS). In this utterance, "technically" is a crucial expression. For NUS, her education in English has actually reversed the order of languages and Arabic has a status of being a first language only

technically. It follows that English is a second language only technically. Actually, as opposed to technically, she implies viewing English as a first and Arabic as a second language. This experience is a strong indicator of the connection between the mediums of instruction and the mediums of everyday life. Based on NUS's interview, these cannot be strictly kept separate, since English as a medium of instruction has influenced the language use of her everyday life. In this respect, GUS's experience is very much in line with an observation of Dewey and Leung (2010): "The extent to which this process of nativization [the process of reappropriating English in postcolonial contexts] has occurred, as well as its significance in terms of identity construction, represents a serious challenge to the practice of referring to English in these contexts as a "second" language. The common assumption is that if someone speaks a second language, then they are a non-native speaker of that language" (p. 7).

This conclusion is more or less explicit in NUS's view of education as responsible for the language situation: "family can help but at the same time kids learn mostly from school I think" (l. 748, NUS). She sees Arabic as neglected in education, but it serves as motivation for her to make Arabic more integral to her personal life. For instance, she has decided to study Islam in depth, for which she sees Arabic as a requirement. Regarding education, she also realized the value of Arabic at Harvard University, studying Islamic law. Despite the material being more accessible and understandable in English, she came to the conclusion that "you realize there is much more to the text in Arabic" (ll. 733-734, NUS). Based on these experiences, she says that she has realized that her lack of proficiency and focus on English throughout her education might have put her at a disadvantaged position. She states that "it's really important to know English and I'm glad I do" (ll. 1471-1472, NUS), but now she questions the validity of the popular view that English is enough to study at international

universities in Qatar. As it has been mentioned before, her ideal is a bilingual one in which both languages are necessary and Arabic has to be preserved and promoted.

TUS describes the importance of English for education along three lines. First, English proficiency is essential to understanding the professors and the courses. Secondly, “people tend to think that if you’re good in English, then you’re good at other stuff as well” (ll. 1211-1212, TUS 2012). In this way, English is actually connected to the perception of achievement in general. Thirdly, the dominance of English in the working sphere leads to the view that “[w]hen you talk in their language, they can relate to you and it’s easier for you to to succeed” (ll. 1222-1223, TUS 2012). These three trains of thought have strong internal consistency, namely that the proficiency in English, required for understanding, is seen in general as an indicator of the ability to achieve, which is also manifest in the working sphere as carrying the possibility of success.

In spite of her views and experiences outlined earlier, MCS’s identity is westernized to an extent. This is manifest especially in her university experiences. The study has already mentioned that even though she is satisfied by her education at Qatar University, if she could have the choice again, she would choose to attend an international university. One of the main influences in this case is the prominence of English in education. As MCS explains, even at Qatar University, her courses are 80% English and only 20% Arabic. She describes that she actually had to struggle learning how to conduct the Arabic part of her studies in Arabic. In her words, “[i]t’s different from English because in English we it’s a different style, different how to write things [...] umm...in English it’s easier also we can understand, we can...paraphrase” (ll. 1491-1496, MCS). Similarly to NUS, this utterance illustrates that, for MCS, the default language of education is English, and she sees Arabic as a difficult detour. Also, answering a question about how her life would be different if she lacked English proficiency, she answers that it would be different because she would not be able to study in

English, she could not understand these subjects and she would not be able to develop herself. Considering how essential self-development in education is for the participants of the study, it seems that what she says connects self-development and education to the English language. The most intriguing factor in this case is that MCS is a student at the national university.

According to IAS, the hardest challenge facing Arabic today is the dominance of English, on the level of education as well. On the other hand, as he explains, it is not necessarily a relationship of conflict. One of the key expressions he uses about himself is “Qatari global citizen” (on the ties between English and globalization see Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011). One of the sources of this identification is his education in the International Affairs program, while the other consists in the fruitful relationship of Arabic and English. In his words, “[s]tudying in Arabic makes me a Qatari, the first part of myself, and teaching in English makes me a global citizen, so that’s basically I need both just like a bird when he flies, he needs two wings, I need two languages and maybe more” (ll. 743-745, IAS). Using the metaphor of the bird, it can be stated that IAS conceives of both languages as necessary for his identity in an organically co-existent way.

Talking about the requirements to enter university, IAS finds them reasonable to an extent. However, he is actually critical about the heavy emphasis on English. As he says, “[i]f you wanted to study but ok, it’s very important to learn English, but it’s not should not be as a challenging condition, you know that you must learn” (ll. 451-452, IAS). Supporting this claim, he states that it is conceivable to have very talented students who do not know English and that their lack of English should not hinder their education. He also cites examples of other countries, South Korea, Singapore, Germany, which indicates that there is no need for such a strong English requirement. In essence, his argument signals that his strong views are well supported by theory and educational experience as well. The paradox at some international universities is that they claim to be international; they remain bounded in the

nation-state ideal regarding language policies. What makes the picture even more complex is that Qatar University is a national university, not an international one, but instead of promoting Arabic as the national language and medium of instruction, it promotes a monolithic language ideal of English, tied to native-speaker norms and U.K. and U.S. standards for the majority of their programs.

Similarly to Mazawi's (2008) worry about the Gulf States that they are becoming consumers of knowledge instead of producers, the main issue, according to IAS, is that Arabic is not a knowledge-producing language in the present situation. If, as Romani (2009) says, the aim of establishing Qatar Foundation's Education City is to reverse the trend of the Arab academia becoming knowledge-consumers, then it is a paradoxical situation. In IAS's view, this is related to the academic dominance of English that he does not see as necessary: "No, you can also develop...umm...education with your language" (Il. 137-138, IAS). Again and again, he returns to his point that English is not a negative influence by itself and that it is possible to use it without having to rely on it as the dominant language.²⁵ So for him, Arabic needs to be a strong medium of education, so it can reacquire its status as knowledge producing. For this, another condition is, in his words, "mentalities", by which he refers to a state of mind that is acquainted with the Arab culture and aims to further support it. All in all, it can be stated that his experiences lead him to develop a balanced view of the language

²⁵ "Funny stuff, my accent. Cause that's where I when I went to Turkey and that's why I respect those people, when I went to Turkey... Oh, this is very important. When we had...there was a conference in an Arab state, I will not say the name, ok? And we went there; no one would speak in Arabic. And I remember that a guy from Canada came, he said "what's this, I feel that I'm Canada", the same place, the same almost you know we are using English and you know it was everything was done in English, you have to ask questions in English, you have to talk with them in English, ok. When I went to Turkey to the international student congress that was in 2010. They speak good English, but when they go to place the address with the, although all of us speak English, the address was Turkish, we use headphones" (Il. 1178-1186, IAS) .

situation, but this balance is an ideal that the present state-of-affairs does not satisfy because of the dominance of English in education.

It can be argued that this balanced view is relevantly similar to the view of English developed by ELF researchers like Jenkins (Jenkins, 2011, 2012; Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011). For instance, in describing the connection between identity and language attitudes, Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) state “where younger ELF users are found in research to identify positively with their own English, it is because they see ELF (not necessarily by name) as likely to enhance rather than deny their future success in a globalized world” (p. 307). As the discussion above demonstrates, the participants do in fact connect their studies in English to their success in very explicit ways. Moreover, due to the peculiar social and linguistic situation in Qatar, English not only contributes to success but is also experienced as necessary. It is the case that the participants see and worry about the dominance of English, but they do not experience it as necessarily marginalizing Arabic. In this respect, they seem to evoke the conception of ELF that is disconnected from the monolithic, nation-state approach that would make it an oppressive neo-colonial force. The experiences of the participants about their practices of English are close to what Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) describe as “the use of English in ELF interactions occurs not as the deployment of a particular set of language norms, but rather as a continually renewed, co-operatively modified, somewhat HYBRIDIZED linguistic resource” (p. 303).

One of the most intriguing aspects with regards to the “languages-in-education” issue is the status of ELF. “The increase in English-medium universities and their multilingual, multi-cultural student (and, to a lesser extent, staff) membership means that universities represent settings par excellence of English as a(n academic) lingua franca” (Jenkins, 2011 pp. 926-927). According to Jenkins, however, international universities do not reflectively cater their language policies towards an ELF-model. The policies are either aimed at helping

students' Englishes conform to native speaker standards or, in the worst cases, at strongly correcting even caricaturizing divergences from the standards. Instead, Jenkins suggests "[a] genuinely international academic approach would mean accommodating (to) the diverse multilingual and multicultural populations that inhabit English-medium universities instead of expecting these populations themselves to accommodate (to) a narrow assimilationist model of English" (p. 927). What this would entail is a strategy of policy-revision that takes into account the particular strengths and weaknesses of speakers of ELF, such as certain pragmatic strategies of code-switching (that the participants of the present study frequently use in switching between English and Arabic as the situation demands), and the way their emphasis is on efficiency over standards of correctness (also see Cogo, 2010).

To develop this line of thought further, it is apt to refer to how Dewey and Leung (2010) describe intelligibility in an ELF setting. As they say, intelligibility in such a context is about being "adaptive"; not adaptive to a certain set of linguistic or pragmatic norms but to the actual communicative situation in which the interlocutor has to be taken into account. So cultural and linguistic sensitivity and awareness of differences are very important in "being accommodating towards the interlocutor" (p. 11). Arguing this way, Dewey and Leung shed light on the interactional dimension of ELF that could guide language policy decisions. For instance, one could suggest that international universities which provide English language teaching could adjust their way of teaching English to steer towards pragmatic strategies in communication and their developments in actual interactions and to steer away from teaching native speaker norms.

It is quite difficult to assess the status of ELF for the participants, since they did not explicitly talk about different types of Englishes, World English, native-speaker norms and so on. However, there are some plausible interpretations and interesting questions for the future that might be worthwhile to mention. It seems that the participants have a mixed picture about

using English that focuses both on communicative efficiency and on native speaker standards as well. Such a mixed picture could indicate that they are aware of the importance of being able to communicate (even at the risk of being “incorrect” according to standards of native speakers) but still adhere to a set of native speaker standards that they have been exposed to through their learning of English in a non-ELF framework. So when TUS say that “[t]here are some people who...have...much lower level...umm...much lower English levels than I have...but they’re much better students” (ll. 1200-1202, TUS 2012), he does seem to consider English in a linear scale where one could be higher and one could be lower. Accent for him is an indicator of English fluency that might signal that unknowingly, his ideal of English use is close to native-speaker norms. At one point, talking about the positive outcomes of English proficiency, he says that “I’m not I’m not that guy with the...extremely weird accent ‘Yes, how are you?’ [using mock-accent]” (ll. 2801-2802, TUS 2012). It seems that here he judges “weird” accents to be inferior in the arena of interpersonal communication for which English proficiency is necessary.

Similarly, NUS does not explicitly talk about the type of English that universities in Qatar require, but she mentions that many students have problems with fulfilling the requirements. She talks about SATs and TOEFLs, which are definitely standardized, Western-educational systems of evaluation. Connecting these two points, one could say that NUS implicitly alludes to the hardships of requirements that impose Western standards. Combined with issues that were mentioned before like that of the application deadlines and other Western academic policies, it seems that Qatari students face some strong challenges because of the uncritical and inflexible adoption of Western academic models, standardized testing and a “central variety” conception of English.

When asked about the entry requirements, GUS declares that she did not come from “the background of taking you know standardized testing” (ll. 1376-1377, GUS). In her

experience then, not only the standards are a novel challenge but standardized testing itself is something to get used to. Even being fluent in English might not be sufficient if one is not familiar with the standardized methods of testing, which is essentially a Western-type educational approach. Speaking about different students and proficiency of different languages, GUS actually lays out a picture of inequality by describing how certain people had to endure years in the Academic Bridge Program. She says that English language proficiency is very important at her university because the system “was developed on the main campus”, which sheds light on the fact that assessing language proficiency proceeds without considerations about local language, education and culture. As described before, she is also an advocate of not only bilingualism but also knowing many different languages. In this context, it means that her experiences are relevant for “languages-in-education” policies because she is a fluent speaker of English, who talks about inequalities that certain conceptions and standards of English can impose and also has an outlook that does not put English and Arabic into an exclusive binary opposition but opens up the field to a multilingual option.

IAS might be seen as arguing for an ELF-type of conceptualization of English. He says that “I think we can do we can develop language...and we can use even we can use English I mean hybrid form English language that will not sort of...umm...you know yaeeni [I mean from the background of taking you know standardized testing] dominate our culture” (ll. 139-141, IAS). It seems that he is aware that there are different types and conceptualizations of English, and some of these conceptualizations can be beneficial for Qatar even though currently, English is conceived and handled in a way that is harmful for Qatari culture as it dominates it. Talking about university requirements, he does not explicitly mention the type of Englishes, rather, he focuses on the same issue as TUS, namely that English proficiency is not an indication of how good a student is. IAS sees the connection between ELF and globalization, he accepts it and argues that it has its advantages, however,

he thinks that there are alternative ways of dealing with English that can be reconciled with a respect for Qatari or Arab culture and the Arabic language.

MCS also seems biased towards native-speaker norms and Western models of education. At one point she compares her Arab education and weekend English-learning experiences. For her, the latter were always more enjoyable. At the regular school, she says, it is “typical” education, but “in English center, there were...umm...British...British teachers. Umm...they...they make us collaborate like classmates like...umm...groups...that helped to love...English” (ll. 253-255, MCS). Moreover, talking about university entry requirements, she also talks about standardized testing like IELTS and TOEFL. As she says, even if someone lacked the grades in high school, one could get into a university if they achieved good scores on these tests. Combined with what other students say, this means that good students who are not proficient in English (according to standardized testing) have trouble in being accepted to university, while students who do not have good grades can get accepted if their IELTS or TOEFL scores are high enough. Such a situation could indicate an undesirable inequality in policymaking, as the experiences of the students point to it.

To sum up the discussion, the interpretation of the self-understandings that the participants have expressed has revealed that conceptualizing identity as negotiated belonging is a useful analytic tool. From the discussion above it seems that there are multiple spheres of belongings that the participants negotiate differently, which thus give flexibility and variability to their identities. For instance, belonging to family is of utmost importance to the participants and belonging to an educational institution is also significant in their lifeworlds. The way the participants understand themselves indicates that their identities are composed of how they negotiate these different belongings. The thesis was mostly concerned with experiences regarding education and language, and it can be concluded that education is seen as an arena of self-expression and self-development; an arena that influences the identities of

the participants by providing a means to express and develop them. Also, language and self-expression through language are connected intimately to the participants' identities, as they have said, and so the way that they use Arabic or English in different social settings contributes strongly to how they negotiate these situations. Furthermore, it seems that the Qatari higher education system offers opportunities to discuss the status of English, of ELF at the international universities (see Jenkins, 2011). The participants of the study seem to be in a complex and conflicted situation regarding the Western academic expectations of English proficiency, and for them both communicative efficiency and native speaker norms play important roles. This situation, as the participants express, leads to certain inequalities for students, which stems from certain policymaking decisions in education and primarily regarding English proficiency.

Analyzing the experiences of the participants has led this study to the insight that they negotiate different social arenas differently. In this respect, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thesis that reality is socially constructed and this constructed reality feeds back into the self-constructions of social actors seems to offer guidelines to understand the process of negotiation. Moreover, Sökefeld's (2001) theory of the dual hermeneutics behind identity helps in the interpretation: for the participants, the frameworks of the different social arenas (family, religion, education, etc.) contribute to a seeming fixity of these social contexts. For instance, they encounter the traditions of Islam as somewhat fixed, but they also encounter it as a fixed framework that gives opportunity for individuals to negotiate their positions within the boundaries of the tradition. Insofar as such an interpretation is plausible, both the hard approaches (fixed identity) and the soft approaches (fluid identity) offer ways to understand the data.

V. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis has been to investigate lived experiences of Qatari students with regards to phenomena at the interconnection of identity, language and education. The motivation behind the project has stemmed from the fact that despite the extraordinary transformational process that Qatar's education is going through, there has been relatively little attention to how the people involved in this process experience it. Although it cannot be said that education and language in the Persian Gulf is an unpopular topic (e.g., Al-Misnad, 2010; Attiyah & Khalifa, 2009; Bashshur, 2010; Davidson, 2008; Findlow, 2006; Kanan & Baker, 2006; Luomi, 2008; Mazawi, 2008; Randall & Samimi, 2010; Romani, 2009; Rostron, 2009; Troudi, 2009), Qatar, as it can be expected, has received only part of the attention, and there have been no qualitative studies that would examine how Qataris experience the social and cultural transformations that are taking place, especially in the area of education.

The research questions (pgs. 10 and 42) have been focused at the unique socio-cultural situation of Qatar, mainly on the role of Arabic and English in the identity constructions of the participants and on its relevance for their educational experiences and academic achievement. The "Introduction" has presented the complex and unique socio-cultural situation of Qatar, in which ELF is dominant, especially in the arena of education, where the Qatar Foundation's complex, Education City, houses international universities that provide English-only programs.

The thesis has reviewed and evaluated the relevant literature regarding many aspects of the research interest. The study has begun with the conception of identity as independent belonging, which was based on the initial impressions from the interview data. First of all, a metatheoretical issue needed to be considered: is using identity as a concept warranted? How is the notion of identity useful, if it is at all? Following the findings of the thesis, it can be argued that indeed, identity seems to be a useful concept when it comes to the lived

experiences of the participants. They themselves use the notion of identity and related ones as well. However, just this fact is not sufficient to warrant employing the concept. On the other hand, there are theoretical reasons to attend to: a well-defined concept has the ability to incorporate the “dual hermeneutics” (Sökefeld, 2001) that underlie identity. The question is then: how to arrive at a well-defined concept of identity?

In order to approach the answer, the thesis has drawn on the phenomenological approach of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). For the purposes of this study, it has been of primary importance that social constructionism conceives of identities as fluid and multiple but also as constrained and influenced by social practices. Identities, to simplify, seem to be real and constructed at the same time. As a philosophical approach, phenomenology provides the groundwork for interpreting how this dual nature of identity is manifest in the lifeworlds of the participants. In a Heideggerian theory, self-understanding is essential for the participants’ being who they are. The results of the thesis demonstrate that the participants do indeed think in terms of identity. Therefore, the empirical findings support the phenomenological approach to identity.

Since the interview data shows that education is a significant arena in which the participants enact their identities, it is illuminating to see how they do that and how it relates to academic achievement. Following Wiggan’s (2007) call for investigating academic achievement from a “student-based perspective”, the present study has examined the experiences of Qatari students regarding achievement, mostly in relation to the language situation and their identity constructions. In a wider framework, theorizing about the connection between education and identity is influenced by the work of Norton (2000). For example, understanding how language learners acquire cultural capital to ‘finance’ their social identities is of relevance for the present study. Similarly, Morita’s (2004) qualitative research on classroom communities and identities lead to the conclusion that students in classroom

environments do not passively accept the positions that they are offered to take but actively negotiate their positions. Identity is then an explanatory device and a notion to refer to this negotiating in a circumscribed context.

Considering the various theoretical positions at work here, it has been indispensable to overview the literature that assists in understanding the unique and complex socio-cultural situation of Qatar. First of all, the connection between the colonial past and the dominance of ELF is crucial, as the participants have often expressed views about how they experience the spread of English as a threat to the Arabic language and to local values. On the other hand, the literature offers various positions in the debate whether English in these cases should be seen as an oppressive force, threatening local languages and cultures or an empowering phenomenon that connects these countries to the blood flow of the globalized world. The thesis's findings indicate that the participants experience English to be both, and they are critical about its oppressive aspect. All of the participants have argued for a more balanced bilingual situation, in which English is present but does not dominate. Following the "Literature Review", the initial conception of identity as independent belonging has been modified. The study has revised the conception of identity to mean "negotiated belonging", which meaning reflects the relevant theories from the literature and which is also useful in interpreting the participants' self-understandings as Muslims, Arabs, Qataris, students, and so forth.

The chapter on methodology has outlined the theoretical background for a phenomenological, interview-based study and the qualitative methods in an interpretive-constructionist theory. "[Q]ualitative' implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman & Webb, 2003, p. 7). If this is so, then a phenomenological approach is paradigmatically qualitative since it implies a concern with experience and the lived and shared essences of experiences. Social constructionism offers a

way to theorize phenomenologically about the social processes that are behind the construction of everyday reality. Applying these insights to the interview data requires the thesis to have a solid interpretive background. The study has relied on Gadamer's (1960/2004) influential hermeneutics in order to understand how their expressions can be connected to the social construction of their reality and everyday lifeworlds. The findings of the study should be seen as trustworthy. Replacing the notions of validity and reliability, the thesis follows in the direction of phenomenological researchers, like Spinelli (2005): "In general, the overall aim of phenomenological research is to provide increasingly adequate meaning statements rather than final laws or uncontestable truths" (p. 135). Similarly, the results are not conceived of as "generalizable" but as "transferable" to other contexts if the relevant contextual considerations are in place. Altogether, the methodology has been aimed at designing the guidelines for the study in order to best approximate answering the research questions. The research interests are all concerned with how the participants see and experience different identity-related, education-related and language-related phenomena, and so a qualitative, phenomenological methodology seemed appropriate.

After the methodology, the findings have been described and discussed along thematic lines that were products of a phenomenological coding procedure. Throughout the analysis, the study has referred to the social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1966) to call attention to the ways in which the interview material can be interpreted by pointing to the participants' social constructions of reality and their processes of self-formation. First, the study has examined how the participants' experiences point to considering identity as negotiated belonging on the fundamental levels of religion and family, of being Qatari and being Arab, of belonging to a global community of humanity. The levels of belonging here point to a layered construction of social reality, beginning with the immediate family that is

interconnected with religion and ending with the most general level of human and global layer.

The importance of Arab belonging is also corroborated by the findings of the Arab Youth Survey (2013). As it has been discussed in the “Literature Review”, the survey has found that Arab youth take pride in their Arab identity, especially after the Arab Spring. Moreover there is a strong trend towards modernization that, at least initially, seems to be contradictory to the pride in Arab identity. The results of the thesis, however, show that the participants do not experience these trends as contradictory. The participants take being an Arab as easily reconcilable with modernizing efforts, even if there are ways of Western cultural influences that have no place in an Arab society as far as they are concerned. As speakers of ELF and as students at universities either national or international, the participants negotiate their belongings to their Arab society and to their globalized environments with the belief that there need be no difficulty in the process and the difficulties they encounter are due to wrong realizations.

Secondly, the thesis has discussed the way the participant enact their identities in their education. Education is a layer of social reality, which constitutes an interesting context of the process of self-formation. In the experiences of the participants, education is seen as an arena of self-expression and self-development in strong connection to their identities. The most significant signal of establishing this connection is gratification. Self-expression, self-development and the joy they bring are dependent on the relationships with professors that the participants state to be essential. Here, professors and teachers become the significant others through whom the mediating process of self-formation, described by Berger and Luckmann (1966), is achieved. It is also essential in forming the identities in terms of future prospects. The experiences of the participants indicate that those of them who have strong relationships with their professors have a high chance of developing a desire for an academic career path.

Regarding this career path, most of the participants prefer Western education at international universities; only one of them expressed concern about their impact on national and Arab identities.

Thirdly, looking at the academic achievement of the participants, the thesis has described that they see it primarily in terms of self-development. Considering the participants' preference for less traditional evaluative methods supports this interpretation. They prefer to be measured based on research projects and papers that give them time and opportunity for creativity, critical and individual thinking. However, the notion of academic achievement as a distinct type of achievement is undermined by the participants' experiences. The participants experience achievement not only in terms of the academia, but they also take their lives, circumstances, values, and other activities into account. Insofar as they are committed to this, they are consistent in seeing achievement in terms of self-development that takes place not only in academic environments. This finding can be interpreted in the following way: achievement is tied strongly to self-formation, so strongly, in fact, that in the social constructions of reality of the participants, achievement cannot be reduced to the academic variety.

The fourth and last section of the findings has been concerned with the experiences of the participants regarding the actual language situation in Qatar and their views on how it should ideally be. The participants have unanimously expressed that in the current language situation, English is overly dominant, which is detrimental to the status of Arabic. Since they also experience their identities in connection to the Arabic language as an important cornerstone of it, the study has investigated how they see the interplay between languages and identities. The most significant tension that appears in their experiences is between the efforts to preserve the Arabic language and the Arab culture and between their inclinations to be part of the globalized world in a meaningful way. Considering this, the participants feel that

English definitely has a place in the Qatari society, but that it should not occupy the place in which it currently dominates. The participants share ideals about bi- or multilingualism, in which there are no unequal power relations between languages and where Arabic plays its traditionally significant role. Almost all of them experience the current situation to fall short of these ideals. On the other hand, all of the participants are optimistic about the future of Arabic and the future changes in the language situation. They have expressed that they believe in the future empowerment of Arabic and in the language situation transforming into a more multilingual one. In these transformations, education has a pivotal role. Consistently with their general views, the participants have stated that they believe that Arabic should have a more emphatic role in education. Moreover, this is supported not only by the nostalgic and traditional value of Arabic but also by pragmatic considerations that assign value to Arabic in the context of education and work.

This section calls to question Findlow's (2006) findings in arguing that there is no simple, perceived binary opposition between Arabic and English. It is true, in one sense Arabic and English are opposed, however, this opposition is not strong, nor is it exclusive. Also, the findings do not support Karmani's (2005) and Troudi's (2009) pessimistic views about the dominance of English and its consequences for Arabic. Contra Karmani and Troudi, the participants of the study seem to be optimistic about the future of the language situation and about the future empowerment of Arabic. The participants believe that English is necessary and that this necessity should not entail the marginalization of Arabic although currently it does. The experiences of the participants seem to be in line with Baker's (2009) statement that English is not a medium that carries the ideology of a single culture, but as a *lingua franca*, it adapts to the various ways and circumstances of usage around the world.

Furthermore, the findings might be interpreted as supporting the arguments of Seidlhofer (2007), Dewey and Leung (2010), Dewey (2012), Park and Wee (2011), Jenkins

(2006, 2011, 2012) and Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011), Cogo (2010) in criticizing the monolithic conception of English. For the participants, English is not a single, unitary object, but maybe they would agree in seeing it as an “activity type” that has various forms and manifestations, depending on the socio-cultural circumstances. In addition, IAS’s consideration that English has become dominant because of its ability to connect people seems to point in the direction of Pakir (2009) who emphasizes the connectivity of ELF as a medium of communication between people who employ it for a variety of practical and pragmatic reasons.

To summarize, the thesis offers four main contributions to the existing literature on the issues of language, identity and education, examining student perspectives in Qatar. First, identity, defined as negotiated belonging has proven to be a useful analytical concept, and its usefulness is reinforced by the participants’ employing terms of belonging. Second, the thesis offers a new perspective for understanding the language-situation in Qatar, regarding the alleged conflict between English and Arabic. The thesis has examined this issue from the perspectives of the participants and found that these Qatari students do see the conflict between Arabic and English, but find the source of the conflict in the dominance of English and also argue that this is not a necessary situation and that there can be a balance between language in which there is no inequality. Thirdly, the thesis contributed to the understanding of education from a student-based perspective, as the participants all expressed seeing education as an arena where they can develop themselves and negotiate their belongings in a new way. Fourthly, the thesis has also investigated achievement in a student-based perspective, and the main finding is that the participants have a broad notion of achievement that can only be arbitrarily narrowed down to the academic type.

For future research, although the findings of the thesis are not meant to be generalized or seen as applying to a wider sample than its participants, the analytical framework, the

theoretical background and the methodology might offer insight in similar contexts, possibly in different Gulf countries. The findings about the experiences of the participants can serve as a basis for comparing and contrasting them with findings about the experiences of different participants in similar contexts. Also, some aspects of the study might be developed further. For example, concerning ELF, a future study could explore the views and experiences of students about ELF in complex postcolonial situations. In such a study, both the conceptualization of identity as negotiated belonging and the phenomenological, hermeneutical and social constructivist theoretical background could be of use. Moreover, as Jenkins's (2011, 2012) studies demonstrate, the issue of ELF at international universities is a pressing matter. The thesis had the opportunity to explore the experiences of students at various international programs and at a national university. Similar studies could be conducted at different institutions in order to gain a better picture about how students' identities are related to these issues around the world. Furthermore, as the participants of this study had valuable insights regarding language, achievement and relationships to teachers, the framework could be carried further to examine English language teaching and student achievement in connection to ELF. All of these tentatively suggested projects would be interesting from a policy perspective.

Altogether, the study has attempted to answer the research questions. For this, developing the conception of identity as negotiated belonging is crucial. Based on the experiences of the participants, there is indeed a connection between identity and achievement, manifest in seeing achievement in terms of self-development and seeing self-development in terms of negotiating belongings. Secondly, the main factor that influences the achievement of the participant is exactly whether they see their education as an avenue of self-development, for which the indicator is gratification. A second factor is close relationships with professors. If this is lacking, the participants have a hard time in seeing

education in terms of self-development and also in enjoying it. Thirdly, the bilingual setting affects the participants deeply. As it has been described, they see the Arabic language as an important cornerstone of identity, and so they are critical of the dominance of English because they see the status of Arabic as underpowered. On the other hand, some of the participants have spent their lives studying in English and at independent or international institutions, which has also led them to develop a somewhat, Westernized or hybrid identity. Fourthly, the students express the connection between their identity constructions and achievement in terms of a wide framework, which includes not only academic achievement but achievement as connected to self-development and negotiation of belongings. In this way, their achievement experiences are tied to their belongings, to their educational belongings and also to the way the language and socio-cultural situation affects these belongings. All in all, the research has demonstrated that interpreting the interview data of the participants, who are embedded in the unique and complex socio-cultural environment of Qatar, results in valuable insights regarding the interplay of identity, language and education. Finally, the thesis has shown that a well-defined notion of identity, such as negotiated belonging, is a useful concept to employ in investigating the lived and shared experiences of Qatari participants in a qualitative, interview-based study.

As a concluding note, the findings of the thesis might be interesting from the point of view of language-related policies in higher education. As the thesis shows, language use is a crucial part of the participants' identities as negotiated belongings. The thesis has dealt with the experiences of Qatari students in Qatar, where ELF is a part of everyday life and English is the medium of instruction in Education City and at various programs of Qatar University. Due to the educational reform in Qatar and RAND's suggestions, English has taken a prestigious place in the development of the education system all over. The thesis has debated Rostron's (2009) claims about a general academic clash between Western and Qatari

educational cultures. On the other hand, it was argued that due to the heavy and sometimes culturally insensitive emphasis on the English language and Western models of education, Qatari students experience conflicts between expectations and outcomes related to their higher education. One of the main factors in these conflicts seems to be a non-ELF conceptualization of English that is dominant in Qatari education. According to Jenkins (2011), international universities are prime sites for investigating policies regarding the use of English, but the majority of universities do not reflectively consider the status of English as used by students; rather, they adhere to a traditional picture of native speaker norms. Due to this fact, the findings of the present study indicate that the language policies can hinder the abilities of the participants for negotiating the way they belong to their educational institutions, and the performances of their identities-in-education. The thesis thus supports the conclusion of Dewey and Leung (2010):

Recognizing this pluralistic and complex nature of language in use would be an important first step towards fundamentally reconsidering current beliefs and practices in language pedagogy. It would pave the way for more ethnographically minded description and analysis of English in different domains of use in diverse circumstances, which can then be fed into curriculum development and teaching materials development (p. 12).

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APPENDIX A: Interview Design

Grand-tour and Planned Prompts

(The aim of the design is to create a quasi-natural conversational setting between the interviewer and the interviewee, where the interviewee does most of the talking. The “grand-tour” questions are meant to elicit a long response that the interviewer can encourage with floating prompts to keep the interviewee talking. The planned prompts are to ensure that even if the grand-tour questions fail to set the stage for the interviewee speaking freely, these planned sub-questions keep the focus on the topic and encourage further conversation around it. The main objective is to acquire a general picture about how each interviewee perceives and experiences identity and academic achievement in their complex bilingual and sociocultural environments.)

Opening-Biographical Questions

Who are you? What do you consider the most important about yourself?

Planned prompts:

- How about culture and your place in your culture?
- How do you feel about Islam and religion?
- What is the role of family life for you?
- Does the Arabic language have importance? What about English?

Are there events or periods in your life that helped shape who you are today?

Planned prompts:

- Tell me more about your childhood.
- When do you think you have become an adult?
- Was there a time when your goals have become clear?
- What is the significance of your years at the university?

Questions about Education and Academic Achievement

How do you feel about your university?

Planned prompts:

- How about the requirements?
- Is language proficiency important?
- How is your relationship with teachers?
- As a Qatari national, how do you feel about your university experiences?

Why do you study [subject of study]?

Planned prompts:

- When did you decide to study it?
- How does studying it relate to you as a person?
- How do you feel about studying it in English/in Arabic?
- Do you consider yourself successful? Is it fulfilling?

What is your goal by studying?

Planned prompts:

- What do you hope to achieve?
- What will you do when you're finished?
- What are the most important gains?

How are your grades?

Planned prompts:

- Is it easy or hard for you to get a good grade?
- How are tests and exams for you?
- How much effort does it take on your part?
- Why do you put in the effort?

Questions about Identity

Please tell me more about who you are.

Planned prompts:

- Do you consider yourself a Qatari?
- Do you consider yourself an Arab?
- What do you value the most? What do you value the least?
- Do you have a worldview? Could you say a bit about it?

What is important to you?

Planned prompts:

- What are your reasons?
- How did these things become important?
- Why [religion/family/culture/language/country]?

What are your values?

Planned prompts:

- Why do you value these things?
- How did you choose these values if you chose them?
- What are the roles of these values in your life?

What kind of person do you see yourself as?

Planned prompts:

- How could you characterize yourself as a Qatari, a student, an Arabic speaker, an English speaker?
- How have you become this person?
- How do you feel about yourself?

Questions about Language

As a native speaker of Arabic, how do you see the relationships between English and Arabic here in Qatar?

Planned prompts:

- At the university?
- In your family?
- In your daily life?

Why do you study and speak English?

Planned prompts:

- Why is it important to speak English in Qatar?
- Why is it important for you?
- What do you think about the language requirements at the university?

- How important is English for your studies?

How would you describe the language situation at your university?

Planned prompts:

- Do you speak Arabic at all?
- How is it to study in English/in Arabic?
- Do you have a preference in your area of studies?
- Does the language situation fit your views?

What are the most important things for you about Arabic? About English?

Planned prompts:

- What do you think about it generally in Qatar?
- Please tell me more about your feelings towards Arabic.
- Please tell me more about your feelings towards English.
- How do you see the future for the languages in Qatar?

Are languages important in your life? Why?

Planned prompts:

- What is the role of Arabic?
- What is the role of English?
- When did you start to learn English?
- Does learning English affect you in any personal way?

APPENDIX B: Interview Transcript

Interview with NUS (personal communication, October 4, 2012)

Transcription

I: So basically the first question as you see you have the question sheet in front of you, so I'm just gonna start from the top and the first and the beginning of them are just biographical questions generally about you you know how you grew up and your family experience so on and so forth. So the first question is asking...umm...who are you and what do you consider the most important about yourself?

P: Ok. Umm...[short laugh] How about I try to break it down...

I: Yeah. Definitely.

P: ...cause it's a very big question.

I: Take your time. Well you have you have those four things as well you can relate to those four points...how about culture, how do you feel about your religion. Those are all things you can...

P: Yeah.

I: ...you can kinda answer in that question.

P: Ok, so, "who am I?" like the first thing I look at is religion.

I: Ok.

P: Like I'm a Muslim and...umm...and then I'm Qatari so....that's culture next. And...umm...I'm very close to my family, like even extended family...umm... My family is very religious, so...umm...that plays a very big role, but...umm...like at the same time, they're very open which...I...not necessarily conflicts with that but people usually have the assumption that...yeah [short laugh]

I: No, no that that's...definitely. No, that's good.

P: And...umm...like my family always pushed for education, so that has been a very big part of me, like myself growing up and even now.

I: Ok.

P: And Arabic language...unfortunately...like it is important within my family and they all speak it very well but because I like us the younger generation have been in international schools ever we were ever since we were little kids...

I: Ok.

P: ...umm...because that it's not really much of a first language, it's...we use English more than Arabic and I'm kind start doing the work right now because of that.

I: Because it's all in Arabic?

P: Yeah, it's all in Arabic. So it's much harder for me like if it was in English.

I: Ok, so...so, ok, so again and contrasting that to English?

P: Yeah, working in English is much easier. Like I can speak you know generally Arabic like you know to my family to my friends, but then having to work in Arabic, I don't I haven't really tried that. I've studied a little bit in school but it was just like the one hour a week and like you so you study Arabic...

I: And at university, did you study Arabic at all?

P: No, I didn't.

I: Ok. How about how about with you with your family? Do you speak that...or your brothers and sisters or friends when you go out, what are you speaking?

P: Well, my parents, I speak to in Arabic. They like...they don't like me talking to them in English. But then my brothers I kind mix between Arabic-English. Friends depends on who I'm out with.

I: Ok, so if you're with your Qatari friends?

P: Depends on which Qatari friends as well. So like people from school, from education city, I'll speak to kind of mostly English, some Arabic, but then people from you know kind of further away...like different environments, for example maybe public schools or something like that.

I: In Arabic, ok, interesting, ok. Umm...the second question. Are there events or periods in your life that helped shape who you are today? So is there anything you could actually remember whether you know about your childhood, about trips you've taken, you know anything that you could think that this kind of you know your education whatever it is but something that kind of stood up for you.

P: I think mostly for me like university and education that really helped me figure out what I want and really helped shaped kind of what I what my goals are. Umm...nothing really is as a kid but... Like even throughout high school, I didn't really know what I wanted to do next. I kinda picked Northwestern just because the major is very broad and will give me the opportunity to kinda explore different fields. And...umm...I guess those last four years really helped me.

I: Is there anything in particular that you could think of that in this four years of your studies here at Northwestern that kind of stood out to you who you are today and how you've been you know...sort of thing.

P: I think the community more than anything else. Like I was...I like to get involved so I was involved in a lot of different activities, student groups...umm...all these different kind of things, like even...study abroad experience...all these helped kind of...give me the chance to explore first different fields and the opportunity to work and interact with a lot of people which really helped develop me as a person.

I: Ok. Umm...you mentioned of course your community, you kind of...glimpse over but tell me like what do you mean by community and how were you involved in the community.

P: Umm...

I: Like what what clubs did you partake in...

P: For example one of the clubs was student government.

I: Ok.

P: Umm...I was...like me and some of my other classmates were responsible for developing the group since we were the first class so that was a big thing for us. So establishing the group and giving it the role it has now, so...umm...like...when you go into a new city, it's like that. You gain a lot of experience just learning how to establish these sort of groups, these sort of things. So kinda going through the whole process of what do you want the constitution to be, what are...what is our goals, what is...what do we intend to kind of...I don't know...

I: And you're looking at it from the Qatari like...the constitution of Qatar or...?

P: Oh, no, just like...umm...with regards to like...we were kinda comparing to other universities.

I: Ok, ok.

P: Like what other the universities doing both here and abroad.

I: Ok, ok, ok.

P: So no, not that big [short laugh]

I: Ok, ok, no, no, just wandering cause you said...umm...pol...you said political...umm...what was...

P: The constitution?

I: No, no...

P: Oh, no, student government.

I: Yeah, government, so when you say government I was like "ok, that seems..." Maybe that's what you were discussing.

P: No, no.

I: Ok. Umm...the third question I want you because you mentioned that...umm...you joined Northwestern just because the major was kind of flexible.

P: Yeah.

I: Umm...but here...within that time, so basically when you came here you just chose because you didn't...you didn't know what you wanted necessarily. So has there a time or is there a time where you where you kind of became it become clear to you what you wanna do and when was that if...?

P: Umm...yeah, actually during my junior year I was I started considering it law. So I applied for a semester a Semester Abroad program and...umm...like I went there and I took a couple courses on law and like it really helped me figure out...like now this is something that I wanna do in the future, go to law school.

I: Ok. Where did you go to Summer Abroad?

P: Umm...Harvard?

I: Harvard?

P: A semester. It was like fall semester.

I: Ok. This summer? Or just before now?

P: Well, you know last fall.

I: Oh, your last fall because it was your last semester at the college...

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: ...at the university.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok, ok. And how did you find that experience?

P: It was really amazing like...it's very very different, being in a big campus, big classrooms...

I: Oh, yeah, definitely.

P: ...and everything and... But the like the classes weren't harder than here, it was the same level of classes, even the law school classes. Like...

I: Ok, that's right.

P: ...I didn't...

I: That's good to hear.

P: Yeah. Like I didn't feel that I was able to compete with students there, so...umm... Like you go there you realize what a good education you have because of Northwestern.

I: I guess that's important to see the comparison.

P: Yeah.

I: Umm...have you ever visited Northwestern home campus?

P: Actually, no [short laugh]

I: It's supposed to be also really...

P: Yeah [short laugh]

I: ...really huge. Ok. So what would you say the most important thing about your university years would you would say was?

P: One thing? [short laugh]

I: Yeah, if you had to say this helped me the most in this section. You can say that you know if you wanna mention a couple, but I still wanna squeeze...a top one out of you.

P: Well, one thing that really kind of pushed me to work much harder was during my first semester...umm...I started like you know I started off you know really excited but then into the semester, you got a little bit lazy and you kind of slack up, so one of the professors, and he's an amazing professor. He called me up to his office and like he gave his whole lecture about how he can see me doing great things like doing my masters and like like from the...being a freshman like during your first semester a professor kind of telling you "I can even write recommendation letters for you for the future"...

I: Ok.

P: ...that really pushed me in...

I: Ok. So it was the beginning of your career...

P: ...helped me a lot. Yeah.

I: ...and he was kind of... Ok, interesting, that's very...

P: So like...the support from the professors was really helpful.

I: Ok. And there was one you said specific, you don't have to mention but of course, one specific...

P: Yeah.

I: Ok, interesting. Umm...umm...was that why you kind of why you started thinking about later on or...?

P: That came later on. Kind of I don't even know how.

I: Ok. And what kind of law are you interested in?

P: I'm looking into media law but maybe international or media law.

I: Ok, so kind of fits in with your studies. Ok, wicked. Umm...now I wanna talk more about like specifics about getting the university and stuff. So if you look at that the question it talks about how do you feel about university in terms of the requirements. Umm...how important is language proficiency, your relationship with your teachers what you kind of mentioned already...

P: Yeah.

I: ...and as a Qatari national, how do you feel about your university experience as a whole?

P: Yeah. Umm...the requirements in term of like classes or getting in or...?

I: Well, the classes, getting in...all those kind of things, yeah.

P: Umm...I don't know. Like I know getting into Northwestern is really difficult but...honestly, I just applied to this and Carnegie Melon, I didn't really apply to anything else [short laugh]

I: Ok.

P: It was...umm... Now, looking at it, it was a risky move, but I don't know, at the time I was confident I guess.

I: Ok.

P: Umm...

I: So, ok...

P: Well, I know a lot of people have trouble with that now, like you know kind of fulfilling the requirements to get into these universities, but...I studied in Qatar Academy which is a really good school so...

I: Yes.

P: ...they prepared us pretty well you know for these...

I: Ok.

P: ...type of universities like...we knew we had to do our SATs, our TOEFLs and everything early on, so...

I: Ok.

P: ...we were very prepared for that.

I: Ok, now in terms of ok, that...Qatar Academy which you know is a school I'm well-aware you know I know a lot about it but...let's say other Qataris.

P: Yeah.

I: The average Qatari.

P: Yeah.

I: Umm...that whether or not they could get into university, whether it's any university at all or if language is a problem, how do you think...umm...in terms of the...the process of getting into university. Like you said your process started before, you were getting prepared.

P: Yeah.

I: How well prepared versus the requirements needed to get into universities are the average Qatari student?

P: I think now they're realizing more that like even schools I mean they're realizing that "we need to prepare our students" because...the people who graduated before didn't really know what they had to do, what they...really had to do to apply. Like I know people who graduated and then after they graduated, they start thinking about universities because that's how Qatar University works.

I: Yes.

P: Like you graduate and then you go apply to but these with these universities you have to apply way ahead.

I: Yes.

P: So a lot of them like were in this situation where they graduated and then they were like "oh, ok, why don't I consider Education City universities?"

I: Ok.

P: But then they realize that "too late", so they either have to kind of take a gap, you know applying later or...they end up going to Qatar University. But...umm...like I know one of my friends...umm...she graduated with the same problem, like she didn't know what to do, the application process, what...like how these things work out. And it took her three years to finally get into the university here...

I: Ok.

P: ...cause she pretty much took a year off trying to prepare but then that didn't really help her so then she went to the ABP (Academic Bridge Program) program...

I: Ok.

P: ...and that prepared a lot of the Qataris to go get into these universities.

I: And she studies there for two years?

P: Umm...I don't know if it's two years or three years...

I: You said it took her three years to get into the university.

P: I'm not sure if it's two or three years, but yet she had to kinda take...

I: Time to get...

P: Yeah, time out, yeah.

I: Umm... How...ok, so so would that be more because of...which leads to the second question with the proficiency of the language or what exactly would you think it is?

P: A lot depends like some of them...like language plays big role but sometimes like they can speak their fluently English but they just don't really know how the process works to apply. Like I have...umm...one of my cousins actually. His English is perfect, he's... Again, he studied...umm...like I don't know if he studied all his life but like he can speak English really well.

I: Ok.

P: But he didn't apply to these universities early, so he ended up going to ABP because wants to wait to apply next year, because he was too late to apply for universities here.

I: Ok.

P: I think it's just like...

I: Just knowing about it and so on, ok.

P: Knowing, yeah. Knowing, knowing that you have to apply before March, not wait till after you graduate and all that.

I: How like whether you're comparing it to other your other colleagues or cohort or whatever...umm...how important do you think language is? Like so for example if you're language was stronger (again, we're speaking about English), would you tend to do better in the courses or not or or was it not really language?

P: No, of course it plays a big role.

I: Ok.

P: Like even the articles you read didn't...like lot of our courses require writing and reading, so you need like you need very good English to be able to succeed.

I: So you would say like for example if someone was in your course, then I'm sure even...even though people in your program, you had...

P: Some people who weren't that good...

I: ...range, right? Would you say that...that it kind of held them back?

P: It did at the beginning but with time they gained it; we had courses in the beginning to prepare us, we had language courses, and I know people who needed more courses, ended up taking more language courses...

I: More courses, ok.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok, so they just what? They would take it in parallel or they would take the course and come back into the program or...?

P: I actually am not sure.

I: Ok. Umm...question you kinda answered: your relationship with your teachers, your professors?

P: Umm...well, we were the first class as well, so we had...

I: You were the first class.

P: Yeah, first class, so we had less than forty students, so...umm...classes were very small, we were very very close with our professors.

I: Ok.

P: Like we still know our professors like on a...personal level, we still go back to them, talk to them if you need anything, so...umm...we really developed very good relations with them.

I: Yeah.

P: Like even the deans. Like I know the deans on a personal level like...a couple times they recommended me to like different things, so...umm...it helps. It helps a lot.

I: Ok, well, of course, for sure.

P: In big universities you don't get the same opportunity to get to know your professors as well.

I: Yeah, definitely, yeah. And so it was a four-year program.

P: Yeah, four year.

I: Ok...umm...as a Qatari national how do you feel about your university experiences? First first in relation to...your overall experience and second, I want you just a little bit to talk about if you can about...umm...how you think... Like for example, you chose to come here versus going to Qatar university.

P: Yeah.

I: How much you think you have changed in terms of that choice?

P: I don't know. Like I've always been in this environment. Like I never considered Qatar University, it was never an option.

I: Ok.

P: So...I don't, I'm not sure if it's much of a change.

I: You've always had...ok.

P: Like Qatar Academy, yeah, it was always this international env modern international environment and the same with the university

I: Ok.

P: Umm...so in terms of environment, I don't know if it's...like there wasn't really much of a change for me.

I: Ok. So basically you're just...this is what you've know anyway since you were young and stuff.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok. Umm...ok, so talking generally about your university experiences in the sense that...umm...how do you feel... And I know again you kinda answered the question, how do you feel it helped and...umm...how do you feel the fact that it was an international institute...that kinda formed, how much you think affected it?

P: Umm...well, I'm not sure if I'm understanding your question correctly but...like if...like if didn't have these universities here...and I don't think, I don't know like if we're gonna go... As girls, it's hard to travel abroad, so...

I: Yes. Well, that's what I mean...

P: Ok.

I: ...so what I'm saying is that if these universities didn't exist, you would've had to go to Qatar University.

P: Hope not [short laugh]

I: But if they didn't exist, you're saying most women are not allowed to travel abroad.

P: Yeah.

I: So you would've either had go there...

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: ...not go to university.

P: Yeah.

I: Or do a correspondence degree.

P: Or do it like I don't know... So I know some people travelled but...

I: Ok.

P: ...I'm not sure how my parents would feel [short laugh] I'm not sure about my parents...

I: Ok.

P: ...that they would be ok with that or not.

I: Ok.

P: But...I don't I never honestly considered like...if the Education City wasn't here cause like when I browse in school like this was an aim to go into one of these universities.

I: But you're aim again was...you...it was just one of them.

P: Yeah.

I: Whichever one would've accepted...well, you only applied to two at the end.

P: Yeah.

I: Because when you were...when this was created, like as you mentioned it, Northwestern is relatively new.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok. So it opened just the year before you graduated.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok.

P: So I graduated and came here.

I: Ok. Umm... So yeah again we answered some of these questions but...umm...you just decided...when did you decide to study Mass Communications or Journalism? What do you...what...

P: Mass Communications.

I: It was Mass Communications. So for...question...did you. Carnegie Melon.

P: Yeah.

I: You applied there, did you get accepted?

P: Yeah, I did.

I: Ok, so why did you choose this over that? When did you decided that that was..."I wanted to study..."

P: There is a very stupid reason [short laugh]

I: [short laugh]

P: I didn't wanna say...I...hate math. I didn't wanna do anything...

I: That's a great reason, I hate math too, yeah.

P: [laughs] So I was like... Cause both are very broad, you can do a lot with them business as well but...umm...

I: Ok.

P: I think communications' is a little bit more creative, so that's why I was kinda leaning more towards it...

I: Ok.

P: ...and...umm...stay away from math and all the sciences at the same time.

I: Ok. So you don't think that you...umm...you joined this program because you felt like...you had something... It was basically "I don't like math, so those are my two choices, so I'll do this" or did you feel..."I can do something in this" like "I can give something back to..."

P: I honestly did not know what to expect with Northwestern. Like it was a new program, no one had tried it before us...

I: Ok.

P: ...so...umm...I think the new the experience also is kind of...

I: How much how much research did you do about the university before you actually like how much did you know about...Northwestern University back in Chicago...

P: Before...

I: ...before you actually...

P: Heard about it here?

I: Or stepped into it here.

P: Well, I knew about the university, just not so much...

I: Yeah, of course, it's a well yeah, it's a known university.

P: Yeah, it's a know university. And then...umm...I remember a couple of the admission people came to talk to us in school...

I: Ok.

P: ...so they were telling, explaining kind of major more, and I got excited when they started talking about it, it seemed very interesting...

I: Ok.

P: ...and much more interesting than all the other options, they're already...

I: So that's when you felt it, you see, that's when you got it, ok [laughs]

P: Yeah, I guess that's one of the things, yeah.

I: Umm...how do you feel... Ok, you studied in English. Now do you feel that...your lack of Arabic...kind of...is a negative thing or do you think that it's it's a sacrifice that you made but you're happy about it that you should've that you had to have made? How do you feel about studying in English versus Arabic or vice versa?

P: I think you kinda need to do both.

I: Ok.

P: It's hard to just speak one language and not speak the other here. Like even if you're gonna end up working in the private sector, you'll still need Arabic to kinda navigate around...

I: Sure.

P: Like you...your work, you're gonna need to work in Arabic somehow.

I: Ok.

P: And...umm...well, in terms of university like not knowing Arabic didn't really impact me. Well, I do know Arabic, not not knowing [short laugh]

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: ...but not being able to speak really well or write well in Arabic didn't really impact me since everything we were doing was in English but...umm...I remember one paper in specific. I was doing a lot of research in Arabic, so...umm...

I: Ok.

P: ...that kind of was...somewhat a struggle but again like if I need anything, I just go to my father and be like "oh, can you explain this?"

I: Ok.

P: So...umm...

I: Ok, go ahead.

P: I don't know what else...umm... But yeah, when you go into the workforce, you kinda realize that you need both.

I: Ok, so would say would you say that this is something that needs to be done, this is something that should be enforced? And is it and is it just for working purposes?

P: Well even like in your everyday life.

I: Ok.

P: Like now I'm kind of getting sick of speaking English all the time like...

I: [laughs]

P: [laughs] I've been made fun of a lot when I go out and like some old people overhear us, like they make fun of me cause I speak in English and not in Arabic.

I: Oh, Qataris you mean?

P: Yes.

I: Ok.

P: Yes, like "oh who do you think" like you know "you're trying to show off" which is not really trying to show off anymore cause everyone speaks English so...

I: Ok.

P: ...I don't really understand it but...

I: When you when you say this the older generation...is it more of a just a joking bother or are they upset?

P: No, not even older generation like people our age...

I: Ok, and they're...and they...they find it as them upset or just...they're just bothering you?

P: I don't know...it's bother I guess, like you know making fun.

I: Ok.

P: Cause they think you know people who speak in English are showing off which...doesn't really make sense since everyone speaks English already.

I: Yeah, sure, definitely. Umm...so so what needs to be done in order to help the future... Cause you're talking about cause I'm looking at it from not just education like you're saying you're talking about the importance of religion...

P: Yeah.

I: ...and if...most...as far as I know, most of the texts that you need to...read are in Arabic.

P: In Arabic, yeah.

I: I would say that in...outside of the professional field like you seem you kinda didn't mentioned in a personal life that it seems like it is it should be an integral part of...you know.

P: It is. It should be and...I realize cause I just kinda started to...study more of our religion. I wanted to read The Prophet's biography and I tried the Arabic and it was just too hard, so I ended up reading the one in English...

I: Ok.

P: ...which is not the best thing and it doesn't...you don't...I feel like you understand and you get a better picture if you do read it in Arabic. It's just it was easier for me to read it in English...

I: Ok.

P: ...and...umm...yeah, it does impact, it does impact a lot. Like I was taking an Islamic law class in Harvard and...umm...like most of our like the reading was in English, so like I was able to understand and it was easier for me to understand what's going on in English but then like when I take for example the Hadith in English and then I go read it in Arabic...like you realize there is much more to the text in Arabic...

I: It's different.

P: Yeah, so...umm...if you wanna really understand it, well you need Arabic.

I: Ok so so what would you think needs to what do you think what would you recommend needs to be done in terms of...umm...the Arabic part? You think that's more maybe a family thing or that's a school thing or what...what would you suggest?

P: Umm...I think schools like...

I: Schools?

P: ...family can help but at the same time kids learn mostly from school I think like especially...umm...writing and...

I: Sure.

P: ...speak really really well like you'll need school with that like family can help you know with speaking and all of that but when it comes actually writing and reading, you'll need school to help.

I: But what I've seen that what they've been doing actually is been taking Arabic away from from the curriculum.

P: Yeah, but now they seem like they're gonna put it back in...

I: They're gonna put it back.

P: ...I'm not sure what they're doing.

I: All right. Umm...do you consider yourself a successful person?

P: Umm...too early to say that [short laugh]

I: So far in your life, in your very young life?

P: Umm...I don't know.

I: I would...you know, well, you know you...graduated from a very...a top university, internationally you work in foreign affairs...umm...

P: [short laugh] I hope so, I don't know I can...honestly I can't say that I am. I feel like I could do much more.

I: Ok, well let me... Are you fulfilled? Are you happy with what you're doing, with your...your education?

P: Education, yes.

I: Yes?

P: Umm...I work on a lot of different projects...

I: Ok.

P: ...so in that term, yes, but...umm...work, I'm not sure about that yet.

I: Too early to say?

P: Too early to say.

I: Ok.

P: Yeah [laughs]

I: What do you hope to achieve? Like what is your goal by studying by you going to university and now you're in the workforce. What do you hope to achieve?

P: I feel like I'm more interested in getting an education rather than work.

I: Ok.

P: That's what I feel like I'm realizing now.

I: Ok.

P: That's why I wanna continue...my masters and go into law school and you know...continue my education.

I: Ok and then?

P: And then...

I: And then just keep it in your head?

P: Well, no I think I'll...I feel like you know working somewhere like QF would be...

I: Ok.

P: ...a place that has to do with education really, gives back to the community... I think this is where I'd wanna be...

I: Ok.

P: ...more than...foreign affairs.

I: Ok. Umm...what...that's a pretty similar question...what will you do when you're finished? We've already done that. You're now already finished, you finished in May Umm...how were your grades? Was it easy for you to get good grades? Was it difficult? Umm...how...

P: It was difficult [short laugh]

I: It was difficult.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok.

P: But it's not impossible...

I: Ok.

P: ...like it's just a lot of work, it's a lot of lot of work.

I: Ok.

P: You spend pretty much all throughout your semester just working.

I: Ok.

P: That's what I did.

I: Ok. So you got good grades, I would say?

P: Yeah.

I: Ok. But it was difficult.

P: Yeah, it was difficult.

I: You had to actually struggle to get good grades.

P: Yeah, and we had a lot of production classes, so production classes are just so time-consuming...

I: Ok, yeah, yeah.

P: I remember like...cause we I was working on a documentary this last semester and towards the end I was in the university in the editing lab from 5am till 12am every day and that's like just a ten minute documentary, it's...

I: Really?

P: Yeah, it's...umm...it's a lot of work.

I: Oh wow

P: You want an A, you need to spend that much time.

I: Yeah, spend time, ok.

P: Yeah.

I: Umm...

P: Well, the good thing is now I'm showing it Tribeca just got accepted...

I: Really?

P: Yeah.

I: This year?

P: Yeah, this year.

I: What is it called?

P: It's...it's a short documentary, it's called Bader It's about...umm...a little a little boy's school life.

I: Ok.

P: That might be interesting for you [short laugh]

I: Yes, cool. And he's a Qatari?

P: Yeah, he's a Qatari.

I: Awesome. I'll watch for that. That's great. Hopefully...

P: It's in the "Made in Qatar" section...

I: So that's another field that you're you know you foreign affairs, education...that's interesting. Umm...

P: I like to pursue lot of different fields.

I: Ok, so let me ask you that. Out of all the...education, you have media cause you just put out a documentary that's gonna be at Tribeca, well, that's that's really wicked...umm...

P: Yeah, I'm excited [short laugh]

I: Yeah, and you got foreign affairs. So you got these three things, what do you think for you is the most important? You said giving back to the community...

P: Yeah.

I: ...what do you think of those three things...would do that the most?

P: Umm...I think education and media.

I: Yeah?

P: Yeah.

I: Ok.

[...]

I: Tests and exams. Were they difficult for you?

P: Actually didn't have much...

I: You didn't have many...

P: ...many types of exams. It's usually papers and research projects.

I: Papers? Ok. Ok.

P: I prefer those over exams.

I: Yeah, definitely, me too cause you know...

P: You take your time.

I: ...compilation of your work and it's yeah...

P: It's harder but it's...

I: Yeah, sure. No, for me, I'm not a test-person, I'm more yeah like I take time and...umm...
So you put in a lot of effort in your work. Why?

P: It makes you feel good when you do...umm...I think that's pretty much like I...I don't
know I kind of like to...

I: So it wasn't for a job, it wasn't to get a good position...

P: Honestly like if you're Qatari, you have Northwestern even if you don't have that higher
GPA you can...

I: Get the job...

P: Get a job.

I: ...you want? Ok, cool. Umm...we're gonna move on to identity, we're gonna try to go
quicker, so we can get you out of here as soon as possible. Umm...you're Qatari, you're an
Arab. Do you consider yourself Qatari? Do you consider yourself an Arab? Do you consider
yourself both? Which one is more important than the other?

P: Both, but more Qatari than Arab.

I: Ok. What's the difference?

P: I don't know.

I: [laughs] Ok.

P: What's the difference... Well, like if you're a Qatari, you're an you're an Arab...

I: Yes. But but you know you do have this whole...nationalism?

P: Yeah, and I feel like when you say Arab like people usually think of kind of...Lebanon, Syria, Jordan first and then maybe the Gulf.

I: Really?

P: I don't know that's...umm...

I: Ok, that's interesting.

P: Maybe because of the Arab Spring [short laugh] that's how people...

I: Well, ok, ok, you know it's very interesting you say that cause it's really the opposite of...where I came from...

P: Really?

I: Well no I no no no, what I mean is that it's actually in reality it's the opposite cause...

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I: ...these are the Arabs and those are people who...took got the language through...umm...

P: I don't know maybe I just look at it like that [short laugh]

I: No, no, no, no that...it's true, I understand what you're saying cause it I think has to do a lot in the West because...

P: Media.

I: ...not only media but because when you go outside to the West, the Arabs are from Lebanon, Egypt, they're not from Qatar, Saudi...

P: Yeah.

I: ...so that I think that's one of the reasons why of course... Umm...so you consider yourself a Qatari first.

P: Yeah.

I: Before an Arab.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok. Any particular reason?

P: I don't know.

I: Just because you are?

P: Yeah. I don't know that's just how it is, I haven't really thought about it.

I: Ok. In your...in your Qatariness or your Arabness, what do you value the most and what do you value the least the...it doesn't have to be necessarily something you do, but something that you see that's Qatari or Arab that you say "we don't really"...this is what value the least".

P: Like, for example I...

I: I don't want to give you an example...

P: Umm...I don't really understand what exactly you're asking about.

I: You're a Qatari, you're an Arab, you spoke about your family, you spoke about language, you spoke about religion, you spoke about...we didn't speak about food, we didn't speak about dress, we didn't speak about a lot of different things. What do you value the most out of being a Qatari or an Arab? And what do you value or what do you...whether you wanna say value the least or say that "we can do without this", what is it?

P: Well most I say religion. Least...what I...or there's so much in the Arab world [laughs]

I: Just one thing. What do you think that we can say "hey, we don't really need this" or "I don't really need this, I can do without this"

P: I'm not sure. Maybe extremism, lack of education. I don't know that's what you're looking or...

I: No, no, I'm not...I'm not looking at it, I'm just trying to see what you know like for me, I would say like I...like I'm not gonna cause I don't wanna influence you but one thing when I say one thing we can do with...the least even though you know is one you like I don't know it doesn't happen so much in Qatar, but it still does, when you go in a line and somebody cuts in front of you.

P: Oh, yeah.

I: You know, for me that's one thing...but that's very region-wise. Like if you go to England, they're all standing in a straight line and the bus stops and if you cut in front...

P: Also that's not only in Qatar, we always assume this like Qatari people do that more...

I: Do what?

P: Like the cutting in line.

I: Oh, no, no, no, this is actually is becoming very...

P: Arab thing?

I: Well, it's not just an Arab thing, I don't wanna say it's just an Arab thing, I'm sure it happens in India and I'm sure it happens in a lot of countries, but that's one thing I would say that...you know.

P: Not sticking to rules.

I: Ok. That's...umm...all right. Umm...

P: That's happen a lot.

I: ...and you said you value religion the most.

P: Yeah.

I: Why? And how...what role does it play in your life?

P: Well now it's starting to play a much bigger role. Didn't really pay much attention to it before or like when you bothered kind of studying or learning but you kinda get to a point you realize that everything else yes, it matters, but nothing matters as much as religion like this is kind of in the end where...I don't know.

I: So what made you get come to that realization that "all this is important to me, for me"?

P: Umm...I don't know, just going through some personal issues and...

I: Ok.

P: ...I realize that whenever like what...you kind of feel more comfortable when you do go back to religion.

I: Ok, interesting, ok. So would you say you have a world view...of things?

P: World view?

I: Yeah.

P: I think so.

I: Yeah?

P: Yeah, I think so.

I: Give me an example, explain to me a bit...

P: Why?

I: How...or why. Yeah, why or how, yeah.

P: Umm...well, I think for it's kind of growing up in a more international community...

I: Ok.

P: ...it gives you...I guess you think about things with more open-mind and...umm...just kind of studying about different regions, studying about you know different areas in the world. You kinda have a better understanding of what's going on. Like I even I realize you know when I went to Harvard a lot of students there were like...like especially you know the...American students, they were like "oh, America first", they were kind of very bounded to the U.S., they don't really understand what's going outside.

I: Ok.

P: So you realize kind of going there that you have...I guess...umm...more of an international look at things.

I: Ok. And that...and you would have to say would you say would you say that has a lot to do with your education that you had throughout your youth...

P: Yes, but even...

I: ...or your family as well?

P: Yes, education, family, but even our country, like...

I: Yes.

P: ...the Qataris is are not like the Qataris aren't even majority in the country...

I: Majority in the country, yeah, yeah, that's true. Umm...so...umm...how important is family to you? How important is your family?

P: Very important?

I: And why? How, why...

P: Umm...well, family come first like even...

I: Before religion?

P: Well, no, no, like religion, family, then you know friends and other people...

I: Ok.

P: ...but family come first. I don't like we've always...you know they're the people you're always around, my parents raised me...they did...like they...worked really hard to give me everything that I have...umm...

I: Your close family?

P: Close family but even...ok, my father's side, I'm not too close with them, but my mother's side like we see them...

I: In your extended family, ok.

P: Extended family...umm... Like my aunts are like my mothers.

I: Ok.

P: We see them...couple times a week, we go there so often so...

I: Ok.

P: ...yeah, my cousins are like my sisters...

I: Ok.

P: ...so I'm very very close to them. If I need anything...like I...they are the people I go to. Of course, they understand you kind of more than anyone else.

I: Sure. And are they all like you? Like I mean in the sense how they've all been raised in this international environment or no or yes?

P: Some, but not all.

I: Ok, not all of them.

P: Like even the ones who didn't, they understand how you know we think about things, yeah.

I: Ok, ok. And so there's...there's always a common...

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: ...family basically, ok.

P: Yeah.

I: How about your culture in your country?

P: Umm...in what terms?

I: Umm...how important does it play a role in your life? Your culture.

P: Umm...less important. I...I don't know...depends on what you mean by culture like a lot of the things like...if it's kind of backed religion, ok, but then a lot of the cultural things which aren't really backed...

I: Ok.

P: ...which seem...umm...

I: For example?

P: For example...like in the beginning girls should like...that mentality kind of change now but girls weren't really allowed to drive.

I: Ok.

P: So you know that cultural stigma of a girl driving is...

I: ...is gone now.

P: Yeah, well...

I: I'm scared somewhat when I see the Qatari ladies driving...

P: Why?

I: Because they drive faster than the men.

P: They do actually...I do do that [laughs]

I: [laughs] Yeah.

P: Yeah.

I: Cause a man, you know he's...what he's gonna do. The lady, you're not sure.

P: Wait, how are you not sure?

I: Well because... I give you an example. From...I...it's my mentality, I would say cause when a guy is coming from really quickly, you know you're gotta get out of the way.

P: Yeah.

I: The lady, you're gonna think, "ah, she...I don't know...she's gonna slow down, you know whatever", so you're not sure [short laugh] if she...

P: If she...

I: ...you know... But for the man you know right away and they're only like...you know, so you have to wait to see you know...

P: I think, I realize that. Like especially if you drive a Land Cruiser, they move really quickly for you, but then if you don't other cars...

I: Yes.

P: ...especially, yeah...

I: [laughs]

P: With a girl driving like some guy gets assaulted if you kinda you know push for them to move...

I: Oh, really? [laughs]

P: Yeah. A Qatari.

I: Really? Umm...

P: Now like I'm too scared especially when they're Qatari guys like go insult them and [short laugh]

I: Yeah, no, no, I've heard some friends tell me that they "you know I don't, you know I get out of the way, if there's space I move in"... Umm...so so ok, so it is important, but there's lot of things that you're saying that...umm...are changing or have changed or that you could...

P: Yeah, yeah, we could change.

I: We can change, ok. Umm...you gave an example of something that has changed. Can you give me something that still needs to be changed that you think?

P: Needs to be changed...umm... Well actually this somewhat changed, but there's a lot of people who still have that mentality...I'm working on a research projects and we're reading some statistics...

I: Ok.

P: ...and apparently there's still a very large percentage of people who don't agree with co-ed education.

I: Ok.

P: So I think...

I: A major or still are a minority?

P: A majority actually.

I: Really? Ok, ok.

P: Umm...like...it depends you know which schools they come from but...

I: Ok.

P: ...like a majority...

I: Overall, it's a majority.

P: Overall it's a majority...so...umm...

I: Ok.

P: I think that is something that needs to kind of start changing.

I: You...so you think that...

P: Like especially at kind of university-level.

I: Ok, so you don't agree with segregation in terms of education?

P: Umm...not really. I don't know if I should be saying...

I: No, don't worry about it, I promise you, nobody's even gonna read my paper.

P: I'm sure it has arguments like for it, but...

I: For and against, yeah, sure, because what I wanna say is that...umm...George Bush.

P: Yeah.

I: He...he agrees with segregations of education in terms of females and males.

P: I don't know if he's the best example... [laughs]

I: No, no, you're right, he's not but what I'm saying is is not because he's an intelligent man why I'm giving him as an example, I'm giving an example cause he's still from the West.

P: Yeah.

I: And he's still a person that was the President of the United States and a person that we would say is...progressive.

P: Yeah.

I: You know. So in that sense, there's still a lot of people internationally that believe this...

P: Who believe.

I: Yeah. So I don't think...

P: I just think that if you're gonna go into the workforce, you're gonna end up working in kind of a mixed environment...

I: Yes.

P: So you might as well get used to it...

I: From the beginning.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok. Country. How important is your country? Like how Qatari do you feel when you watch a football match of Qatar?

P: [short laugh] They kinda suck.

I: [laughs] But you still love them, you still cheer for them.

P: Yeah, yeah, my uncle's kinda the head of the football team, so...

I: Ok.

P: ...I have to cheer for them.

I: Ok, ok.

P: I love football but for some reason I don't watch football here.

I: Ok.

P: Yeah.

I: You watch football you mean outside...

P: International.

I: So you do watch like Barcelona and Real Madrid and stuff but you don't watch the Qatari...

P: No.

I: Ok...umm...

P: I supposedly support Qatari Football Club.

I: Qatar Club?

P: Cause they're next to my house, that's all.

I: Oh, ok...umm...and...umm...National Day and things like that, is this important for you?

P: [sighs] Like in the beginning it was fun, but now it's just a hassle with everything like...

I: [short laugh] The traffic and whatever, ok. Umm...

P: Like...umm...celebrating the country shouldn't be about just going out and doing all night crap, it should be actually giving back to the community, doing some of those activities, instead of pointless celebrations I guess.

I: So what do you guys do for here in Northwestern for example for National Day, did you guys do anything special?

P: No.

I: No? Pointless stuff as well or...?

P: We didn't do anything actually.

I: Didn't do anything. Ok. Umm...

P: Not that I know of. I wasn't here last year, so I don't know.

I: Ok, yeah cause you're you were studying overseas...umm... So overall how...when I ask you to again this is...umm...I've probably asked you all this separately...umm...how do you characterize yourself as a Qatari, a student, an Arabic speaker and an English speaker? Like...umm...how can I say this to...umm... Do you see yourself as a person who...umm...is a better person because you studied in English? Or...was it an advantage...should you have studied Arabic more? Like basically how do you characterize yourself as what...like looking back and saying what could've...

P: Umm...initially I thought it was an advantage. Now...I realize I could've been kind of a disadvantage not to be...not as strong in Arabic...

I: Ok.

P: ...as I am in English. So...umm...I think well, overall, yes it's really important to know English and I'm glad I do and...umm...like a lot of people say that if you can speak English really well and write and read and everything and then like can barely...like you know you can speak a little bit Arabic, like you can do really well here in Doha.

I: Ok.

P: But I don't know if that's true.

I: So you think you do need more proficiency in reading and writing and stuff.

P: Yeah.

I: Umm...so do you consider yourself a native Arab speaker? You don't.

P: Well, technically it was my first language...

I: Ok.

P: ...but again since kindergarten, I was in English school, so I don't know if you...

I: And you're more proficient in...

P: English.

I: English, ok. Umm...overall, how do you see the relationship of English and Arabic working in this country? Whether it's university, your family life, or in everyday daily life, like going out to the mall, so on and so forth.

P: [sighs] Let's see...family. Family like I feel like I need more Arabic than English...

I: Ok.

P: ...and... But it's kind of a mix...for me. Like I speak both in English and Arabic. Umm...university, I guess more English than Arabic, like especially for people going to Journalism now that they...do want to report here and kinda reach to majority of people, they'll need to start writing in Arabic.

I: Yeah, ok.

P: Umm...but I feel like you do need like to kinda especially in media if you wanna target the majority of people, you need Arabic.

I: Ok.

P: Like the documentary we did was in Arabic...

I: Ok.

P: ...so that's good at least even though...

I: Subtitled?

P: Subtitled, yes.

I: Ok.

P: It was to subtitle it especially since...umm...I don't know the Arabic was hard for me it's cause it's...umm...the kid is kind of from...Beduin tribe, so like he talks about poetry and he starts kind of reciting some poetry verses, so you can't really translate them...

I: Ok, yeah, for sure.

P: ...and get the essence of that is in Arabic, yeah. In English, I mean.

I: Now in your daily life, English. Umm...how important is it in your everyday daily life?

P: Very.

I: It's very...

P: Yeah.

I: Like...in every aspect like...

P: Yeah, majority of things.

I: When you were shopping, you speak in Arabic or English?

P: English, mostly.

I: When you're at work? Now?

P: Umm...now I'm trying to...

I: It's Arabic more, right?

P: It's Arabic, yeah.

I: Ok.

P: It's more Arabic.

I: So in your work now for you Arabic is more important than English.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok.

P: Yeah. I kinda did bad in my interview, I started talking in English.

I: Oh, really? [laughs]

P: I could've answered... [laughs]

I: You didn't do that bad, you got the job, right?

P: Well, yeah [laughs] but again, Northwestern degree.

I: Yeah, that's true, yeah, yeah. On the flipside of that...umm...your work in the media, will it be in English or is it still in...is it all in Arabic? I mean are you there to be like an English media person or you're there to be an Arabic...like...umm...

P: Well, we have to do both.

I: Ok.

P: Yeah, so...umm...but then again, for example, if I read anything in English, I have to kind of do the analysis in Arabic, so...again even if I'm gonna work in English, I have to kinda go back to Arabic.

I: Ok.

P: Yeah, so...umm...

I: So...umm...you would say that they're equally as important, you need them both, or Arabic is more important in your job right now?

P: More important than English.

I: Ok.

P: Yeah.

I: Ok. Umm...when you're at university, did you speak Arabic at all? With your...at the university with your friends, whenever was it just...all in English with specs of Arabic words or was it...?

P: Well, we'd speak a little bit in Arabic with our friends but majority, English.

I: Ok. And right now you would say...umm...if you had a choice between studying in English and Arabic, you would...what would you choose?

P: Still English.

I: English cause it's...why?

P: Cause...I wanna do my masters later, I wanna go into good schools, English. I need English right now.

I: Ok. Umm...does the difficulty have anything to do with it? The fact that...

P: Difficulty of...

I: ...of studying in Arabic versus studying in English for you?

P: Well...umm...do you mean like... Well, now yeah of course, I'm not gonna go into studying in Arabic because it's much harder for me, but like if I started studying Arabic since I was really young...umm...instead of English, I think I'd still choose English.

I: Ok.

P: But...work on improving my Arabic.

I: Ok. Again, you spoke about the importance of religion. So does the your language situation, currently fit your views of things?

P: Umm...in what terms?

I: Are you content with your with your level of Arabic?

P: No.

I: You're not. Ok. And the reasons for that are?

P: I can barely write. What I do honestly is I write whatever I want in English, go on Google Translate, translate it, and then take it to this other website called Yamli which like you kinda type in English, but it gives you in Arabic...

I: Really? What is it called? Yamli?

P: Yeah [laughs]

I: That's wicked. You're giving me information now.

P: So it takes me so that much longer to write anything in Arabic.

I: Ok, ok.

P: Yeah, it's hard for me to kinda just go and write in Arabic.

I: To type in Arabic, ok...umm...

P: I should not admit this [laughs] but yeah...

I: Do you think generally in Qatar, there should be more Arabic? Like what do you think about the Arabic...umm...the the importance of Arabic. Like for example I bought a car for...umm...and I see and I'll give you my personal experience, I get upset about it because I go into a store and I'll see an older Qatari woman or a man and you know they don't speak English, so they speak in Arabic...

P: They can, yeah...

I: ...and they kinda get sometimes you know...

P: Frustrated, they can really...

I: No, the other people get frustrated, like "why don't you speak English?"

P: Oh, yes, true actually, true.

I: I'm like "excuse me, this is their country, you should speak Arabic". So...umm...how do you feel about that situation and how do you feel what do you think...?

P: It feels like English is becoming kinda more prominent than Arabic which shouldn't be the case and I guess the country's realizing it now after all the changes that happened before, so that's why it's kinda taking a step back to Arabic...umm...I do agree, I think Arabic should be the prominent language. If we're not gonna preserve our language, who will? So...umm...yeah.

I: Do you yourself as a Qatari woman, national that that that there's a loss of something because of the lack of Arabic?

P: Yes. Yes, I have a lot of difficulty even like going into kind of...gatherings, my mother, my you know the majlis gathering and all of that, I kinda find it difficult to communicate with especially the older women.

I: Ok.

P: So, yeah, you do feel that loss.

I: Yeah, ok. This is kind of probably the last question, how do you see the future for languages in Qatar? You just discussed that it should be...and it's coming back but do you think this is coming back for good or just a moment or like what do you how do you see the future of the language situation in Qatar?

P: I think Arabic will really come back. Like people are realizing now that this is really important and we need to kinda go back to Arabic.

I: Ok.

P: And like even people who studied their whole life in English like for example me it's kind of getting frustrating, so...like we do wanna go back to Arabic, we do kinda wanna help preserve the language, you know, get you know the younger generation to really learn the language better than we did.

I: Ok and what...and are they doing so what do you know anything...anything that they're doing?

P: Umm...not really....I know the schools they're talking about kind of...switching them back to Arabic...

I: Ok.

P: Umm...

I: Cause I know of one program...there's a professor at Georgetown university.

P: Oh, yeah, they do teach...

I: His name is Dr Abbas Al Tonsi

P: Yeah, they teach Arabic.

I: Yeah, but he's doing a course he's doing...umm... Because one thing that I found very interesting is that he's making a course for Qataris for Arabic.

P: Oh, ok.

I: Cause he was a professor at Georgetown in America and he made a series of books...

P: Yeah.

I: ...and all mostly all universities that teach Arabic were using his books.

P: Oh, ok.

I: And now he's here at Qatar University but the thing that's interesting is that...they'll be teaching Arabic as a heritage language. Do you know that means?

P: Yeah how so though

I: Like not as your native language...

P: Yeah.

I: ...but as the language of your heritage. So for example kind of...this is the language of my forefathers.

P: That kinda undermines the point of it though.

I: Ok. Do you think so? That's...

P: It seems like it from what you explained but it does seem like it undermines the point of it, it becomes this...older generation language when the new generation language is English. That's...

I: Ok, interesting.

P: I don't know if I'm understanding it correctly...

I: Yeah, they're teaching as a heritage language, a language that is...your...

P: That yeah.

I: ...but it's not as a second language...

P: Yes, but...

I: ...but it's also not as a first language. It's as a heritage language which again yeah, there's a fine line of the definition basically, but that's what it is basically, it's the language of your parents and your grandparents which is why you need to preserve it.

P: Like...as lame as it sounds, but kids kinda wanna use a language that seems a little bit more cool.

I: Ok.

P: So if they kinda portray Arabic as kinda the older generation language, then that won't really happen.

I: Ok.

P: I don't know.